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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning more than 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah archives.

Beth Sholom Congregation members in Potomac Maryland thank our outgoing Executive Director Rachel Zutschi for superb, loving care and wish you the best always as you move on to the next phase of your career.

I believe that Moshe hopes that B'Nai Yisrael will come to Eikev and find everything familiar. If a person finds anything in Moshe's sermon in this parsha new, then he must not have been understanding previous parts of the Torah.

"Eikev" is a code word meant to remind us of three previous instances in the Torah where the word establishes a connection to Avraham and to the land of Israel. After the Akaidah, God tells Avraham that his offspring will possess the gate of their enemies because he has demonstrated complete devotion to Hashem (Bereishis 22:15-18). (Note the warning that our enemies will surround us when we are in Israel.) God later tells Yitzhak not to leave Canaan during a famine and that He will give his offspring all the land, eikev (because) Avraham kept His mitzvot (Bereishis 16:1-5). When Calev stands up for entering the land despite the opposition of ten meraglim, God promises that he will survive to enter the land despite the rest of the generation dying away, eikev (because) he has followed Hashem wholeheartedly (Bemidbar 14:21-24).

Avraham is central to understanding Eikev largely because of the context in which he appears. God created the world and set aside His garden as a place for Adam and Chava to have a continuing relationship with Him. After Adam and Chava sin and must leave Gan Eden, the Torah goes through numerous additional generations, and in all of them, most people are evil. After the flood, even Noach disappoints Hashem. The next generation, at Shinar, lives together in peace and decides to build a monument to the sky to glorify themselves, not to praise God. To prevent this misguided focus, Hashem mixes up their languages so they can no longer cooperate and complete their building project. In a world where all people have misdirected priorities, Avraham appears, works out that the idols of the time could not be genuine deities, and concludes that there must be one mind, a single God, who created everything. Avraham selects God, and God selects Avraham.

Avraham's significant mitzvot are absolute loyalty to Hashem, chesed (kindness), and mishpat (justice). He teaches these values to his son and grandson, and thereby initiates B'Nai Yisrael. (Hashem formalizes these values at Har Sinai with Aseret Dibrot and then provides concrete mitzvot to illustrate them in Mishpatim). God's covenant with Avraham, Yitzhak, and Yaakov is to give them many offspring and the land of Canaan. These gifts – countless children and land – are tools for the Jews to use to follow Hashem's mitzvot and to create a nation dedicated to chesed and mishpat. In Eikev, Moshe repeats these lessons and explains that the gifts of many offspring and land are tools to build a better world, not unrestricted gifts. In this better world, more nations will emulate the values of the Jews and build positive relations with Hashem.

God's promise to our Avot is land to the gates of our enemies. The situation for Israel has always been a small nation in the midst of much larger nations, nearly all enemies, many out to destroy us. Palestinians have a mandate to drive all Jews out of Israel and take over the land themselves. The irony is that God's promise has always come true. No nation

other than Jews has ever been able to make the land of Israel productive. During two thousand years under the Arabs, the land remained desolate. The Jews took over Gaza after 1967 and made it into a vibrant agricultural community. After Israel returned Gaza to the Arabs, they destroyed all the modern agricultural improvements and turned it back into a desolate wasteland, a territory of poverty and hate.

Historians claim that they can analyze and explain why the winning side of every war earned its victory. The only exceptions are the wars involving Israel in 1948, 1956, and 1967. The problem with the explanations of these historians is that they are missing an essential part of the picture. Israel won the wars the same way that the Jews won the battles in the Torah. Hashem fought on our side – in the Torah, openly in many cases. Later, after we entered the land, Hashem has been operating with hidden face, behind the scenes, as He promised in the Torah.

The message of Eikev continues. In Jewish neighborhoods all over the world, our enemies cross the gates and attack us in our homes, shuls, schools, and businesses. In many areas, such as in many parts of Europe, it is dangerous for a Jew to wear a kipah in public. Our enemies attack or ways of life – kashruit, kosher slaughter of domestic animals, bris, Jewish schools, etc. These attacks are far more frequent than they were fifty years ago. Amalek is still chasing Jews all over the world.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, had strong ties to Israel. He visited often, purchased and brought back books, Judaica, art – countless items that he made available to his congregants for many years before the Internet made it easier for individuals to make such purchases ourselves. His parents and sister moved to Israel. Rabbi Cahan's beloved sister, Naomi Katz, a distinguished artist, passed away last week at age 96. Hannah and I visited with Naomi, her late husband Stan, and with Naomi and Rabbi Cahans parents many times over the years. The Cahan-Katz family represents chesed and mishpat – two primary values of Eikev. We have learned from their examples, and we hope to convey them to our grandchildren as our heritage. Shabbat Shalom.

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Yehoshua Mayer HaLevi ben Nechama Zelda, Yonatan Ophir ben Ilana, Leib Dovid ben Etel, Asher Shlomo ben Ettie, Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, David Moshe ben Raizel; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Oscar ben Simcha; Sharon bat Sarah, Noa Shachar bat Avigael, Kayla bat Ester, and Malka bat Simcha, who need our prayers. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Shabbat Shalom,
Hannah & Alan

Dvar Torah: Eikev: Always Within Reach

by Rabbi Label Lam © 2003

> *And now Israel, what does HASHEM your G-d ask from you except that you should fear HASHEM your G-d to walk in all His ways…* (Devarim 10:12)
>
> *Don't walk in front of me. I may not follow*
> *Don't walk behind me. I may not lead.*
> *Just walk beside me and be my friend.*
> *And together we will walk in the ways of HASHEM.* (Lyrics to a Jewish children's song)

What's being asked of Israel is a tall order. "Is fear of G-d such a small matter?" asks the Talmud. The answer is, "Yes, for the likes of Moses!" (Broshos 33B) The question remains what about the rest of us? Is the task too difficult for us to accomplish?

Perhaps the answer is locked away in the introductory words, “And now…” What do they add to the mix? How does that tiny phrase enhance the verse? Here the Talmud offers an impotant rule which may be the key to this verse and many others, “And now” always means teshuvah”- poorly translated as repentance. Why does “and now” imply teshuvah?

1-How many times do we decide to begin a diet of some sorts tomorrow? Are those lunges at change ever successful? We all know the answer. We all know the game. If someone is serious about doing something real the business starts now! “And now”, not some future date.

Sometimes we like to look back at the golden years of our accomplishments with nostalgic pride. Back then we had courage… standards. Back then… What about now? “And now”, not in the glorious past alone but a step of personal progress in the ever present. “And now” is that time real things are done.

2-There’s another reason why it’s so hard to address the present moment. Our minds are often preoccupied either with worries about the future or guilt about the past. All the while a lifetime of precious present moments may pass us by. Why do our minds work that way? The answer may be that we are preoccupied with the future just because we remain unreconciled with the past. Since there are so many open files and and unresolved personal issues we intuitively sense that our credit may be low. Deep in our heart of hearts our worries may not be baseless. With so many of life’s unpayed bills we nervously anticipate the notice from the bank.

Sir Arthur Connan Doyle of Sherlock Holmes fame is said to have sent a letter to ten individuals with the most unimpeachable character that he could find. He simply wrote, “Flee! The matter is known!” Within 24 hours nine of them had left the country.

Stated a little less whimsically, there are matters that we cannot run far or fast enough to escape, because each of us carries within the knowledge of who we really are and what we have done albeit beneath layers of rationalizations.

The only solution is to submit and to admit and that process is called teshuvah. Having reconciled the past in the the present tense the fears of the future begin to dissipate. The joyful present becomes the soup de jour. The person in a state of teshuva actively fulfills the mandate of each “now” and “now” again. “And now”, and not the misery and guilt ridden burdens of the past. “And now”, as opposed to the hordes of worries invading from the future. “And now”, implies being in a state of renewed and active trust.

Imagine a father and son walking across a busy boulevard. The child needs only to hold tightly to his father’s hand. He’s not alarmed at the roar of the cars and trucks about him. Just the opposite. He’s amused. His father is happily guiding him and protecting him as they navigate through traffic. To be a little ahead or behind is to be in mortal danger. The only safe place is there beside his father. That’s more the esssence of teshuvah.

And now, maybe we can understand the challenge of the verse, “And now Israel, what does HASHEM your G-d ask from you except that you should fear HASHEM your G-d to walk in all His ways…” Like that child in traffic, the only real fear is the fear of losing his father’s hand. It may be a tall order but as the father’s hand it’s always within reach.

Have a good Shabbos.

https://torah.org/torah-portion/dvartorah-5763-eikev/

The Whole Truth: Thoughts for Parashat Ekev

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

In reviewing the history of the Israelites since the Exodus, Moses reminded them of the two sets of Tablets of the Law. The first set was given with much fanfare at Mount Sinai. Yet, when Moses found the Israelites worshiping the golden calf, he threw down the stone Tablet and shattered it into pieces. He then ascended the mountain a second time, after which he brought down the second set of Tablets of the Law.

The Talmud (Berakhot 8b) reports the tradition that both sets of Tablets – the shattered and the whole -- were kept in the ark. A moral lesson is drawn that we should show honor to elderly sages who have forgotten their Torah due to their mental decline in old age. Just as we honored them when they were "whole," so we are to honor them when they are "shattered." The shattered Tablets and the whole Tablets are revered.

Perhaps we can draw another lesson from the placement of both sets of Tablets in the ark. Each individual has strengths, virtues, accomplishments. These reflect us at our best, when we are "whole". But each individual also has weaknesses, moral blemishes, failures. These reflect the "shatterings" within us. What are we to do with our failures?

One approach is to ignore our shortcomings, and concentrate only on our strengths. This is the way of ego-centrism and arrogance. Another approach is to focus on our shortcomings to such an extent that we become guilt-ridden and self-hating. This is the way of negativity, making us feel powerless and unworthy.

The holy ark teaches us how to be "whole" human beings: we store both sets of Tablets within our holy arks – our inner selves. We recognize our good qualities, but we do not disdain our failures. We bring our "shattered" selves along with our "intact" selves. We learn from our errors. If we are contrite about foolish decisions, missed opportunities, for failing others when they needed us – we cannot let these failings destroy us; but neither can we go on with our lives as though they never happened. We live as "whole" human beings when we can integrate our virtues and vices, our strengths and weaknesses, our successes and failures. The "whole" Tablets remind us of how good we can be. The "shattered" Tablets remind us how we have sometimes fallen short – but how we can regain our footing and do better next time.

The ark in the Mishkan held both sets of Tablets of the Law, just as our inner selves hold both sets of our own personal Tablets of our lives. Ultimately, this strategy teaches us humility as well as confidence; it teaches us to look to our strengths but not to forget our weaknesses; it helps us strive to become whole human beings.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and strengthen our Institute. Each gift, large or small, is a vote for an intellectually vibrant, compassionate, inclusive Orthodox Judaism. You may contribute on our website jewishideas.org or you may send your check to Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, 2 West 70th Street, New York, NY 10023. Ed.: Please join me in helping the Instutite for Jewish Ideas and Ideals at this time.

https://www.jewishideas.org/whole-truth-thoughts-parashat-ekev

Drawing on the Wisdom of Isaiah Berlin

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Isaiah Berlin was one of the intellectual wonders of 20th century England. Born in Riga in 1909, his family emigrated to England in 1921. Isaiah quickly adapted to life in his new land, attending St. Paul's School and Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He studied classical languages, ancient history, philosophy, politics and economics; he was a top student and a voracious reader. In 1932 he was appointed to a lectureship at New College, and he became the first Jew to be elected to a Prize Fellowship at All Souls, considered to be among the highest honors in British academic life.

During the 1930s, he was one of a group that developed "the Oxford philosophy," a movement that also included premier Oxford scholars J. L. Austin, A. J. Ayer and Stuart Hampshire. During the Second World War, Berlin was stationed in New York serving in the British Information Services)1940-42(, and then at the British Embassy in Washington DC)1942-46(. In 1945-46, he spent four months in the Soviet Union, meeting with persecuted members of the Russian intelligentsia, including Anna Akhmatova and Boris Pasternak. His stay in the Soviet Union deepened his staunch opposition to communism.

After the war, Berlin returned to Oxford where his interests turned to the area of intellectual history. In 1950, he received a research fellowship at All Souls, allowing him to pursue his academic interests which were outside the mainstream of philosophy as it was then taught at Oxford. He made regular visits to American universities, where his lectures impacted on the development of intellectual history as an area for academic research.

In 1957 Berlin was elected Chichele Professor of Social and Political Theory at Oxford. Also in 1957, he was knighted. In 1967, he resigned his chair upon becoming the founding President of Wolfson College at Oxford, a position he held until retiring in 1975. He continued to teach, write and lecture, and passed away in 1997.

That a Jewish immigrant boy from Riga became one of the foremost intellectuals of England is a tribute to Isaiah Berlin's brilliance, as well as to the receptivity of Oxford and the English academic community. He rose to great intellectual heights, and did so as a British Jew.

In his biography of Isaiah Berlin, Michael Ignatieff reports that Berlin's mother taught him in his Riga childhood: "We were Jews….We were not Russian. We were not Letts. We were something else. We had to have a home. There was no point living in a perpetual qui vive. Above all, there was no point denying it, concealing it. To do so was undignified and unsuccessful" *)Isaiah Berlin: A Life,* p. 30(. This early lesson stayed with Berlin throughout his life. Even as he adapted and "belonged" within English academic life, he was always aware of his being, in some sense, an "outsider." He understood the need to belong and therefore sympathized with Zionism, the movement that promoted the right of Jews to live their own lives and to be fully accepted as Jews. Berlin explained that to be a Jew "was to know how deeply men and women needed to be at home somewhere in the world. Belonging was more than possession of land and statehood; it was the condition of being understood itself")Ibid. p. 292(.

When he served in New York in the early 1940s, he was drawn to public Jews such as Rabbi Stephen Wise and Justice Louis Brandeis. He could not bear "apologetic American Jews" such as Walter Lippmann and Arthur Hays Sulzberger and saw them, in the words of Lewis Namier, as "trembling amateur gentiles")Ibid., p. 105(. Berlin and a colleague coined the acronym OTAG, Order of the Trembling Amateur Gentiles.

Berlin was not religiously observant in the Orthodox sense, but he never took his Judaism in the direction of Reform. "Berlin was adamant that if there was to be observance, it had to be as authentic, as traditional, as close to the ancient faith as possible….For all his skepticism, his respect for the religious content of the ritual was unfeigned")Ibid. p. 294(.

Berlin's Jewishness may have played a role in a central aspect of his thinking. Jewish tradition teaches that all human beings are created in the image of God; all have access to God; the righteous of all nations have a place in the world-to-come. Whereas other religions and ideologies have claimed exclusive possession of truth)and eternal salvation(, Judaism makes room for others. This recognition of "truths" among all people is uniquely important.

In his essay, "The Pursuit of the Ideal," Berlin developed his understanding of pluralism. He rejected the view that "all genuine questions must have one true answer and one only, all the rest being necessarily errors." He dismissed the notion that there was one dependable route to attaining this "one true answer." He argued against the idea that "the true answers, when found, must necessarily be compatible with one another and form a single whole, for one truth cannot be incompatible with another — that we knew a priori" *)The Proper Study of Mankind*, p. 5(.

Indeed, those who have posited one correct truth to the exclusion of any others — such people have fostered totalitarian societies, inquisitions, religious persecutions etc. They have been so certain that they alone have truth, that they disdain — and often punish — those who do not share their truth. And they commit their atrocities with self-righteousness! "To force people into the neat uniforms demanded by dogmatically believed-in schemes is almost always the road to inhumanity" *)Ibid.*, p. 16(.

Berlin's idea of pluralism is elegant. It differs from relativism that calls on us to accept all views as being equally valid. Rather, pluralism is "the conception that there are many different ends that men may seek and still be fully rational, fully men, capable of understanding each other and sympathizing and deriving light from each other…..Intercommunication between cultures in time and space is possible only because what makes men human is common to them, and acts as a bridge between them. But our values are ours, and there are theirs" *)Ibid.,* p. 8(.

In his essay, "Two Concepts of Liberty," Berlin directed his attention to the predicament of oppressed classes or nationalities. "What they want, as often as not, is simply recognition)of their class or nation or color or race(as an independent source of human activity, as an entity with a will of its own, intending to act in accordance with it)whether it is good or legitimate, or not(, and not to be ruled, educated, guided, with however light a hand, as being not quite fully human, and therefore not quite free." Berlin repudiated paternalism "not because it is more oppressive than naked, brutal, unenlightened tyranny, nor merely because it ignores the transcendental reason embodied in me, but because it is an insult to my conception of myself as a human being, determined to make my own life in accordance with my own)not

necessarily rational or benevolent(purposes, and, above all, entitled to be recognized as such by others. For if I am not so recognized, then I may fail to recognize, I may doubt, my own claim to be a fully independent human being" *)Ibid.,* p. 228(.

Berlin underscored these thoughts in his essay, "Nationalism." He pointed out the obvious: the thought of 19th and early 20th centuries was "astonishingly Europocentric." When even the most imaginative and radical political thinkers spoke of Africans or Asians, there was "as a rule, something curiously remote and abstract about their ideas….The peoples of Africa and Asia were discussed either as wards or as victims of Europeans, but seldom, if ever, in their own right as peoples with histories and cultures of their own; with a past and present and future which must be understood in terms of their own actual character and circumstances" *)Ibid.*, p. 603(.

Isaiah Berlin, steeped in academic studies, was not an "ivory tower" scholar. He thought deeply and cared deeply about politics and society. He thought deeply and cared deeply about the Jewish predicament as an oppressed and misunderstood minority group; he thought deeply and cared deeply about how humanity might be more respectful, thoughtful, and fairer.

His teachings are as relevant today as they were when he first expounded them.

* * *

I was born and raised in Seattle, Washington, as were both of my parents. My grandparents had come to Seattle early in the 20th century from towns in Turkey and the Island of Rhodes. My ancestors had lived in the old Ottoman Empire since the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492. Spanish religious intolerance at that time was counter-balanced by Ottoman religious tolerance.

In Seattle, Jews were a tiny minority of the general population. Sephardic Jews were a small minority within the city's Jewish population. My grandparents, like the other Sephardic immigrants, spoke Judeo-Spanish as their mother tongue. I thought it was perfectly natural and normal to grow up in Seattle with Turkish-born grandparents who spoke a medieval form of Spanish!

I strive to live according to the truth of my faith. Yet, I also am struck by a massive reality: I am part of a Sephardic Orthodox Jewish community that represents an infinitesimal percentage of humanity. There are at least seven billion other human beings who live according to their faiths, and who know little or nothing about mine. If I have the true way of life — one for which I am willing to live and die — how am I to relate to the overwhelming majority of human beings who do not share my faith?

Growing up as an Orthodox Sephardic Jew in Seattle, I learned very early in life that I had to be very strong in my faith and traditions in order to avoid being swallowed up by the overwhelming majority cultures. I also learned the importance of theological humility. It simply would make no sense to claim that I had God's entire Truth and that seven billion human beings were living in spiritual darkness. I surely believed — and do believe — that I have a profound religious truth that guides my life. But I also believed — and do believe — that all human beings have equal access to God, since God has created each one of us in God's image.

One of the great challenges facing religions is to see the full picture of humanity, not just our particular segment of it. While being fully committed to our faiths, we also need to make room for others. We need, in a sense, to see humanity from the perspective of God, to see the entire canvas not just individual segments of it.

Religious vision is faulty when it sees one, and only one, way to God. Religious vision is faulty when it promotes forced conversions, discrimination against "infidels," violence and murder of those holding different views. How very tragic it is that much of the anti-religious persecution that takes place in our world is perpetrated by people who claim to be religious, who claim to be serving the glory of God.

While religion today should be the strongest force for a united, compassionate and tolerant humanity, it often appears in quite different garb. Religion is too often identified with terrorism, extremism, superstition, exploitation…and hypocrisy. People commit the most heinous crimes…and do so while claiming to be acting in the name of God.

Isaiah Berlin's concept of pluralism provides a framework to be faithful to our own truths, while being genuinely respectful of the truths of others. Religion should unite humanity in a universal striving for Godliness and righteousness.

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https://www.jewishideas.org/article/drawing-wisdom-isaiah-berlin

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Eikev -- Planting With Tears

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine *

Certain phrases in Jewish Scripture are associated with particular connotations in the collective Jewish memory. One example is the word "Eicha." From the word "Ayecha" -– said to Adam after the first sin, when G-d asked him, "Where are you? What is going to be with you?" –- to the word "Eicha" which the prophet Yirmiya used to begin the book of Lamentations which the Jewish king Yehoyakim burned because he didn't want to hear the rebuke of the prophet -– the word "Eicha" is associated with negative consequences.

Until this week's Parsha.

In this week's portion we read that the Jewish people will declare the question, "Eicha: How will we manage to conquer the enemy." G-d replies, "Do not worry. All will be well." It sounds so easy. Still, the word "Eicha" is so deeply associated with fear and worry. How does one manage to achieve the response to "Eicha" that is found in this week's Parsha, the declaration that all will be well?

There is a well-known passage in the Talmud)Rosh Hashana 16(that states: "Any year that starts in poverty shall end in wealth." The commentaries explain that if there is a sense of poverty as the year begins, then we pray well for a good year because we feel desperate. When channeled properly, a healthy concern for that which is important to us can produce great blessing.

Similarly, the word "Eicha" implies that a difficult situation is developing. It is up to us to formulate our response. Do we feel inadequate, as Adam did when he responded, "I heard Your voice, but I feared because I am inadequate, so I hid."? Do we hear "Eicha" and burn it, as Yehoyakim did, because we don't want to hear its message? Or, do we hear the "Eicha" challenge and mobilize, putting our best foot forward to ultimately be blessed with the words, "Do not fear. All will be well."

Every person has "Eicha"s in their life. The Tamud is telling us: Don't burn your "Eicha"s. Think about them. Consider them. Pray regarding them. A year that begins with concern is a year which will produce blessing.

A number of years ago, I had the privilege of officiating at the wedding of a scholarly young man whose parents were unaffiliated. Just before the ceremony, I stood with the groom in a private room preparing him for the momentous occasion. He spent a few moments in deep prayer that his marriage should be a successful one. He donned the traditional kittel, and we placed a small amount of ash upon his head to remember the ruins of Jerusalem. All was well, until I noticed from the corner of my eye that the groom's mother was becoming noticeably concerned about the state of mind her son was in. Her son was getting married. Shouldn't he be happy? Why was he taking these observances so seriously?

I excused myself from the groom for a moment, and called his mother aside. I said, "You are probably concerned that your son is so serious right now. That is normal. He is getting married and is praying for success. Just give us a half hour. When you see his smile after the ceremony you will understand."

That is the meaning of the verse in Tehillim)126:5(which says, “Those who plant with tears shall harvest with joy.” A healthy concern when starting off a new chapter in life is precisely the formula which ensures success. As one master teacher of public speaking expressed it: “I come not to take away the butterflies in your stomach. I come to help you get the butterflies to fly in a constructive formation.”

As we are now less than six weeks from Rosh Hashana, it is worthwhile for us to use these weeks wisely, to identify our concerns and to formulate a strategy which will change the “Eicha”s of our lives into blessing.

We all have concerns. We are just ready to start a new school year. Will the children succeed? How will they interact with their peers…with their teachers?

As we approach the new year and the Day of Judgment, what will the ruling be about our health and that of our loved ones? Will we be blessed with a year of financial serenity?

Many people are tempted to burn the “Eicha”s of their lives)or at least to put them on the “back burner”(. This is not because people are wicked, but simply because we sometimes feel helpless. What the Torah is teaching us is that there is a law of opposite results. A person who allows himself to have a healthy amount of concern is a person who prays well and achieves a year of blessing.

In just a few weeks, Jews throughout the world will gather to recite the final prayer of the High Holiday season, the prayer of Neilah. Anyone who achieves a moment of sincere prayer -- even then -- is accepted. When the final sound of the shofar is heard at the end of Yom Kippur, it signifies that finally the “train” has left. But until that moment, even as the train is pulling out, one can still jump on and be a part of this glorious time.

But although it is possible to board the train at the last minute, the wise person seeks to board as early as possible. That way you can choose your seat and make yourself comfortable. You can think about your concerns; contemplate your needs. You can plan for the upcoming meeting properly so that you know in advance what you would like to pray for. This way, when the Conductor comes around and asks, “What can I do for you?” you will have a ready answer.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos.

Rabbi Mordechai Rhine is a certified mediator and coach with Rabbinic experience of more than 20 years. Based in Maryland, he provides services internationally via Zoom. He is the Director of TEACH613: Building Torah Communities, One family at a Time, and the founder of CARE Mediation, focused on Marriage/ Shalom Bayis and personal coaching. To reach Rabbi Rhine, his websites are www.care-mediation.com and www.teach613.org; his email is RMRhine@gmail.com. **For information or to join any Torah613 classes, contact Rabbi Rhine.**

http://www.teach613.org/eikev-planting-with-tears/ Note: Rabbi Rhine is on vacation for a few weeks, and he has authorized me to reprint selected Devrei Torah from his archives during this period.

Eikev – Flexible but Firm

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer *

As Moshe continues his final speech to the Jewish nation, he reassures us that Hashem’s protection will be with us as we enter Israel. Though we will be facing great and mighty nations in the land of Canaan, we need not fear or worry, for G-d will be leading the battle, removing all our enemies from before us.

Moshe cautions us that this could lead us to inappropriate haughtiness. We might feel that it was our righteousness which led Hashem to fight on our behalf. Especially as these nations were known to be evil and immoral, it stands to reason that G-d is removing them and bringing us into His holy land because of our worthiness. Moshe tells us that while these nations would be destroyed for their wickedness, it was only due to the promise Hashem made to our forefathers that He was bringing us to replace these nations in His holy land.

Moshe concludes his warning by saying he has proof that it could not possibly be our own righteousness that would bring us to G-d’s holy land. His proof? We are a stiff-necked nation. (Devarim 9:1-6)

The Sforno (Devarim 9:6) explains that the essence of stubbornness is to follow my own will and my own intention even when others provide clear reasons why my intentions are wrong or even detrimental. Stubbornness means failing to properly consider the ideas and thoughts of others. No human being can ever truly understand all sides of an issue on their own. There will always be elements or consequences that one fails to realize. It is only when I am willing to listen to other people, to really hear them out and consider their ideas and thoughts, that I can reach true clarity on an issue. Therefore, one who is stubborn can never attain true righteousness or purity of heart. He will always fall short in his understanding of himself, of the situations he faces and of what it is that G-d truly wants of him in any given situation.

The Sforno gives us a great insight into how we must approach life, in general. In order to achieve greatness, we must look beyond our own ideas. We must open our ears and our minds to what others have to say and incorporate their thoughts suggestions and ideas into our own lives and our own way of thinking.

I believe, though, that there is another lesson here, as well. The Sforno's reason for considering what others have to say is not because my ideas and thoughts are wrong. It is only because other people have perspectives and knowledge that I don't. I do have valuable ideas and thoughts, as well. In fact, the Sforno's lesson applies to them, as well. My own ideas and perspectives are just as critical for them as theirs are for me. I need to open my mind to hear and consider what others say, but I still need to think and decide for myself. My ideas still have bearing, and the correct approach may incorporate both of our thoughts.

A friend of mine was asked an unusual question last week. A congregant came home on Shabbos to find an earthworm crawling along the burning hot asphalt of his driveway. He assumed the earthworm was burning and possibly even dehydrating from the heat, and wanted to know if it was permissible to violate the Rabbinic laws of muktzeh to move the earthworm to the grass, and if there was any comparison to saving a human life. (The laws of muktzeh prohibit handling insects on Shabbos.)

My friend asked a noted Torah scholar who discussed at length whether the laws of muktzeh would be waived here. (Amongst other considerations, it is hard to tell whether or not an earthworm is actually in a state of distress, as one could tell with many other animals.) He, therefore, felt that it would not be allowed to move the earthworm. However, he didn't stop there. He said that his attitude would be to turn to Hashem and say, "I wish I could get involved and help this earthworm, but there seem to be Halachic reasons why I should not. Hashem, I'm asking You -- the One Who is Merciful on all of His creations-- to step in and see to it that this earthworm will be OK." Even when there is more to consider, that doesn't mean we are wrong.

* Rabbi, * Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD. Am HaTorah has moved. The new address is 5909 Bradley Blvd., Bethesda, MD 20814.

Torah Thoughts from SEED on Parshas Va'eschanan *

Am HaTorah Congregation *

In this week's Parsha, the Torah tells us that we should love G-d with all our heart, life, and possessions. Rashi comments that "you should love G-d" means that we should serve Him out of love and not out of fear, because if you serve Him out of fear you could eventually abandon your service if it becomes too hard for you. This seems to be hard to understand. If someone is already serving G-d devoutly, he already knows that this is truthful and he already is aware of reward, punishment, and the world to come. That doesn't change whether he serves G-d out of love or fear, so why does Rashi say it does? I would've said that knowing these factors one would continue to serve Hashem regardless of which emotion motivates someone? Perhaps we could say that humans are built with emotional limitations. Certain emotions may be great springboards to help us serve Hashem, but inherently they won't be able to carry us all the way. No matter how truthful something is, there is a certain breaking point that this emotion no longer is the best way to serve Hashem and it could even backfire. May we merit to be able to understand our needs and emotions and use them to help serve G-d properly.

Daniel Feldman

This week's Parsha consists of the shema which we say twice a day, morning and night. In this prayer we are testifying to Hashem's oneness. The Rokeach explains that the reason the letters "ע" and "ד" are enlarged in the Torah is because it spells "עד" which means "testify" which is what we are doing when we say Shema.

In the first verse it says "Hashem is OUR G-d, Hashem is one" . Rashi explains that now in days ONLY us the Jews recognize that He's our G-d, but in the time of Moshiach which should come speedily in our days the entire world will acknowledge Hashem as the only G-d in the universe. A big part of the morning prayers on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur consists of this idea. The next part of shema says that "you should love Hashem with all your heart, soul, and money" and that we are willing to give all these up to serve Hashem. The question is: why say "money" after it says "soul"? Isn't it obvious that if you're willing to give up your soul then you're willing to give up your money? Rashi explains that there are some people that do value their money over their souls!

Chaim Schwartz

The first paragraph of the Shema prayer is sourced in this week's Parsha. One lesson we can learn from it is from the verse: "And these matters, which I command you today, should be upon your heart..." As Rashi notes, the verse is indicating to us how to view the commandments--as if they were commanded to us 'today', not millennia ago. The commandments should be viewed as fresh and exciting, not old and stale. With this attitude we will be able to perform the commandments with the zeal and excitment they rightfully deserve.

Shmuel Baumann

In this week's Parsha Moshe designates 3 of the 6 cities of refuge. Rashi says Moshe did this, even though the commandment wouldn't be applicable until the Jews entered the land of Israel, because of his love for the Mitzvos. Moshe was a very busy man, involved in teaching Torah and judging cases of an entire nation. Why was it so important for Moshe to personally designate the cities, a mitzvah that didn't yet apply and could be done by the next leader when the Jews entered the land? Perhaps we could suggest that Moshe did this because he had a clarity in the value of even a mitzvah that didn't yet apply. The fact that this would be a mitzvah in the future gave it incredible value, and he didn't want to give up the opportunity to be involved. We see the value of every Mitzvah that we do, even the seemingly small ones. May we see the value in the Mitzvos that we do and be granted the opportunity to do many more.

Paysach Feinberg

In this week's Parsha, the Torah says to love Hashem with all of your heart, soul and assets. Rashi explains that the words "with all your soul" means to even give up your life for Him. He then explains that "with all your assets" is necessary because some people love their money more than their life. He gives another explanation that "assets," in Hebrew, can be read a little differently to read "measure;" meaning, we should love G-D with every measure He measures for us, whether good or bad. Rav Henach Leibowitz, brought down in the Chiddushei Haleiv, points out that it seems that Rashi wasn't troubled by the need to tell us to give up your assets (once it tells us to give up your life) within the second explanation. This is quite befuddling, because giving up your life out of love for G-D is seemingly harder than accepting every small thing that comes our way from G-d with love?! Apparently, when it comes to significant adversities, a person can more easily accept that it's all from Hashem and to be happy, then one can when it comes to the small, day to day things, which are more common and less significant. We see how easy it is to get caught up in this world and its daily grind that we are so prone to forgetting a staple of Jewish belief, that G-d did run, is running, and always will run every detail of our lives. We should merit to continue to grow in our awareness of G-d's personal, specific involvement of even the most little things in our lives.

Aryeh Singer

* Am HaTorah runs a two week SEED program featuring yeshiva students from Chofetz Chaim Yeshiva the week before and after Tisha B'Av. Rabbi Yehoshua Singer edits and shares highlights from the program. Unfortunately this material was not ready in time last week, so I am presenting it here now..

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Parshat Ekev: Restoring Leadership

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

The Derekh. It is very important to be on it. If, God forbid, someone is off it, his parents will be the talk of town. Not, God forbid, publicly. Behind closed doors, by the (kosher) water cooler, in hushed conversations during the Torah reading in shul: "have you heard? So and so's (son; daughter; the whole mishpuche) is OTD - Off The Derekh. The Derekh is the

path. The path of Torah and Mitzvot. There is only one Derekh! To each faction, that is. The Ways of Torah are multiple, but they all lead to the gates of the World to Come, so just make sure your seat is secure. There may have been shortcuts, traffic jams, bending some legal corners, and stopped vehicles [i.e. baffled believers] on roadsides, but if you never lose your faith, or if you have lost and found it you will be OK. Or so we believe.

The truth is that the Derekh of Torah is not about ping-ponging from the road to your smartphone, looking to spend as little time as possible on the road before hearing that bugle of the Messiah, the harbinger of redemption declaring: "you have arrived at your destination." The Derekh of Torah is not about the destination, it is about the path. It is the road trip we plan with the best travel book in hand, looking for scenic roots and byways, hikes and lakes. We want to enjoy every moment of that road trip, and we definitely should, because YOLO.

In Parashat Ekev (Deut. 18:12), Moshe tells the Israelites that God does not ask too much of them:

> *Now, Israel, what is it that God is asking of you?* [not much] *just revere God, walk in His paths, love Him, and serve God with all your heart and might.*

The Talmudic sages were perplexed by Moshe's statement and asked (Berakhot 33:2): "Is this a small feat?" Their answer is no less perplexing: "Yes! for Moshe it was a small feat!" How can Moshe, the greatest leader our nation ever had, speak to the people from his perspective without considering where they are coming from?

The answer is Customer Experience. The feeling that Moshe conveys to the people is that of a satisfied customer, and when you feel like that, it is easy and genuine to tell others to try and enjoy as well. Instead of looking at the Torah as a legal codex which must be obeyed to avoid punishment and merit eternal bliss, one should look at it as a product with divine origin, a system geared for the improvement to near perfection of the human experience, which uses are supposed to enjoy and be thrilled about. When this is how one perceives the Torah, he reveres God. The reverence is not fear of punishment or loss of future reward, but rather a concern about losing the beneficial experience. Inter-personal relationships, especially between parents and children, can be either based on the fear of punishment, or on the reverence which stems from love. That is when one side loves the other so deeply, that it is afraid of acting disrespectfully or apathetically and losing that wonderful connection.

When that feeling is present, the rest follows naturally. One loves God, walks in his path, and serves Him, but unlike human relationship, it seems that here only one side benefits, since God is immutable. The truth is that while the observant person is the direct benefactor, the circles of positive impact reach much further, and influence his family, his community, nation, and eventually the whole world. And that brings us back to the OTD problem. If the path is so wonderful, if on the scenic by-way of our lives we ware able to experience many great things thanks to the observance of Torah and Mitzvot, how come so many people veer off the Derekh?

In many conversations with parents, educators, and rabbis the most common theme is that of faith. There are courses, retreats, lectures, books, and workshops which try to restore or create belief in the tenets of Judaism and to answer theological questions such as divine justice, life after death, and evolution versus creation. While all these are very important, there is a very important element which is ignored or overlooked by most parties involved. It is not because they think it does not merit attention, but rather because they believe that most people who are off the Derekh or not on it yet, would not care about it before their theological questions are answered. I beg (as is my Minhag) to differ.

Consumer Experience

What is missing, for millions of Jewish users, is a positive experience with that product called Judaism, and specifically with its practical aspect. The greatness of Judaism is that it is not an abstract system of beliefs reserved only for the elite, nor is it a set of rituals meant for isolated groups of hermits, ascetics, and fakirs. Judaism is a path for everyday life. It reminds and helps us to be more sensitive, more aware, better friends, spouses, and parents. It teaches us to give charity, to help someone find a job, to return a lost object, to find our spirituality, and to appreciate the power of repentance. To get the full value the Torah promises again and again, especially in the book of Deuteronomy, faith alone is not enough. Observance is needed. And it is there where we have a problem. Our customer service needs an upgrade.

I'll explain. It is important for people to observe Mitzvot, and that includes OTD's. They still feel guilt and remorse when

they depart from their religious education, and I have heard from many of them that they feel a jolt of familiar joy when once in a while they follow a familiar ritual. What went wrong is that the feeling of importance is not reciprocal and thus consumer experience is hurt. We all feel that Halakha is important to us, but we also want to feel that we are important to Halakha. We want to know that if we, as consumers, are not satisfied with the product, the seller or his representative will fix the problem, and if they cannot we will be entitled to return the product. In our analogy, the original product, the Torah, obviously cannot be changed, but there is a wide field of authority given to the representatives, and we would like them to use it, and to show us that our needs, concerns, and the things which might push people off the Derekh, are recognized and addressed.

Many of these representatives, our rabbis and poskim, are trying to do the best, but most of them say that they will address concerns only privately and only when they are brought to their attention. Indeed, there is a proliferation of private rulings, just for this person, at this time and place, and under these circumstances. Even halakhic works are prefaced with the warning that the rulings presented in them are not to be followed without consultation with the reader's rabbi. The truth is that for every person who asks the rabbi a question, there hundreds if not thousands who do not ask. They do not ask because they are ashamed or embarrassed, they don't know of any rabbi whose ruling will solve their problem, or they simply gave up. My estimate, based on correspondence with my readers and from the many FB pages which deal with halakhic questions, that at least seventy-five percent of observant Jews have a serious problem with a certain aspect of Halakha. Their solution is either to suffer quietly, to slowly drift away from observance, or to forego that specific law. That last approach is more common then what people believe, and it puts a heavy burden of guilt on the observant person, who usually hides it form his or her immediate family and friends.

It is incumbent upon the rabbis to deal less with questions of theology and philosophy (though they are no doubt necessary), to get out of the comfort zone of "personal rulings," and to move beyond the publication of theoretical halakhic musing which cannot be relied on in practice. Let the rabbis consider the option of following the commandment of the Torah, presented few verses after the verse mentioned above (ibid. 17-18):

> *For God… is great, mighty, and revered. He will not give preferential treatment and will not accept a bribe. He upholds justice for orphans and widows and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothes.*

God's might is in His ability to hear the plight of the weaker layers of society, those who are usually pushed aside or stepped on by the system. The warning of Deuteronomy, and the call to follow God's pathways in caring for orphans and widows, was unfortunately ignored already in biblical times, as the prophet Isaiah demands and laments (1:17 and 23):

> *Learn well, seek justice, rectify corruption, provide justice for the orphan, and defend the widow… your leaders… do not provide justice to the orphan and the plight of the widow does not reach them…*

Let our religious and lay leaders rise to the task, fight for solutions for all Jews, at any level of observance, even if they do not explicitly ask for those solutions. Let them understand that the Jewish world is stratified and that each stratum has its own weaknesses and stress, so that one size does not fit all. Let us all follow the paths of God and become, in the words of Psalms (68:6):

> *A father to the orphan and a defender to the widow, God who dwells in His Holy Abode!*

Shabbat Shalom.

* Torah VeAhava (now SephardicU.com). Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school). **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets** Hebrew quotes from the Torah, omitted here, are in Rabbi Ovadia's orginial, most available in Sefaria.

Note: footnote, primarily in Hebrew, on an only slightly related point, omitted.

By Rabbi Haim Ovadia *

The English name of the Book of Devarim, Deuteronomy, is derived from the Greek translation of the rabbinic name for the book – the repetition, or recap, of the Torah. It seems appropriate to have this recap as the month of Elul is approaching, followed by Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, as it is a period of reflection and contemplation in which we review and relive the year that was, hoping to correct past mistakes and to avoid future ones. One of the tools which is supposed to help us with this process is the Viduy, confession. Soon, Sephardic communities will start reciting daily Selihot, and the Ashkenazim will join them in a couple of weeks. By the time we conclude the High Holidays prayers with Neila at the end of Kippur, we will have rattled off hundreds of confessions and supplications, admitting atrocities such as murder, adultery, and armed robbery. To say that our Viduy is an overkill would be an understatement.

Viduy should be a personal thing, not a check list you read while banging your chest as a sign of remorse. It should not be recited daily, and definitely not three times a day, or dozens of times as is the case with Kippur. Several years ago, I wrote about Viduy and offered and alternative, which you can read here. But even that was only a suggestion for reflection and probably should be updated.

But let us go back to our Viduy, the one printed in our prayer books. What would the Viduy look like had it focused on this statement (Deut. 10:17-18):

> *For God… is great, mighty, and revered. He will not give preferential treatment and will not accept bribe. He upholds justice for orphans and widows and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothes.*

God's might is in His ability to hear the plight of the weaker layers of society, those who are usually pushed aside or stepped on by the system. The warning of Deuteronomy, and the call to follow God's pathways in caring for orphans and widows, was unfortunately ignored already in biblical times, as the prophet Isaiah demands and laments (1:17 and 23):

> *Learn well, seek justice, rectify corruption, provide justice for the orphan, and defend the widow… your leaders… do not provide justice to the orphan and the plight of the widow does not reach them…*

What would the Viduy look like if it were authored by Isaiah? Probably this:

> *They pay tribute with their mouth and lips, but their heart is far removed from Me, and their reverence of Me is a force of habit (29:13).*

Besides idolatry, which does not seem to be a major concern nowadays, Isaiah speaks of hypocrisy, business ethics, lack of leadership, accepting bribe or benefits, disregard for the weaker layers of society, lacking respect for Shabbat, and pursuit of wealth instead of knowledge (See Isaiah 1:13-24; 2:7-8; 3:14; 5:8; 56:1-2; and chapter 58).

Not everything Isaiah says applies to us, but his list is much more realistic and relatable than the Viduy in our prayer books, even though Isaiah predates the Siddur by a thousand years. Maybe what we should have in the Siddur instead of the text of the Viduy is some lines of guidance such as:

> At this point in Tefila you should take several minutes to sit in silence and contemplate your day, week, or year. Focus on one item of each of the following categories: my relationship with God, with other people, and with myself. Think what is missing and how you can make it better. It does not have to be a huge change. The most important thing is to acknowledge the problem and start working towards a solution, even if we take baby steps at the beginning.

While that might have been the ideal solution, many people feel more comfortable reading a written text, or using it to guide the process, so I would like to ask the readers to write and tell me (you could always say that these are problems you recognize in other people):

> What are the things you would have included in a modern version of the Viduy?

Shabbat Shalom.
* Torah VeAhava (now SephardicU.com). Rabbi, Beth Sholom Sephardic Minyan (Potomac, MD) and faculty member, AJRCA non-denominational rabbinical school). **New: Many of Rabbi Ovadia's Devrei Torah are now available on Sefaria: https://www.sefaria.org/profile/haim-ovadia?tab=sheets** Hebrew quotes from the Torah, omitted here, are in Rabbi Ovadia's orginial, most available in Sefaria.

An Insight from the Ukrainian Border

by Adam Cohen *

A few months ago, I traveled to the Polish border with Ukraine, where a constant stream of refugees were arriving, having had their lives uprooted. Most had been on foot for several days, carrying little children and their belongings. They had walked about 25 miles, including a final 3 mile walk from the train station by the border. After arriving in Poland, the refugees walked down a narrow path, where volunteers from around the world were offering medical care, blankets, food and drink, sim cards and more.

The first face greeting these refugees was a young woman, Anna, who stood day and night a few feet from the border. She stuck out to me because, unlike most volunteers, she actually spoke Ukrainian, and I asked about her story. Anna came as a refugee a month earlier with her mother, who is a therapist. Instead of taking refuge and waiting to return home, they decided to turn back and help the continuing flow of refugees that followed behind them. Anna's presence was vital, because without her, these refugees were now safe…but they were now strangers in a strange land. This was what freedom from oppression looked like for them.

And yet there was one group of Ukrainians who had somewhere to go. In the reverse of the status quo for so much of our history, it was the Jews who had a safe haven to travel to. A week after my trip, I sat down for seder night in Israel, a time when Jews focus on the miracle of our exodus from Egypt. And yet this freedom could have taken a variety of forms. Having somewhere to go as we journeyed through the desert is perhaps as big a part of the miracle as escaping in the first place. 3334 years later, Jewish refugees escaping the Ukraine have not had to feel like strangers in a strange land because they have been able to continue journeying on to the land of Israel.

The Torah this week tells us to empathize with refugees, because we too escaped oppression in Egypt (Dev. 10:19). We too were strangers in a strange land. And yet freedom from that oppression can take a variety of forms. Throughout our time in exile, the Jewish people escaped oppression, only to arrive as strangers in a new, strange land. In the very next chapter, Moshe reminds the Jewish people that us having a destination as we journey through the wilderness is perhaps as big a part of the miracle as us escaping Egypt in the first place (Dev. 11: 8-9). And, as I witnessed first hand on the Ukrainian border, that is something for us, as modern day Jews, to be extremely grateful for.

Shabbat shalom!
* Rabbinic student, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, Riverdale, NY. Adam Cohen has studied and worked for Jewish organizations in the United Kingdom, Israel, Australia, and the United States.

https://library.yctorah.org/2022/08/eikev/

Eikev

by Rabbi Moshe Rube *

[Rabbi Rube is unable to send a Dvar Torah this week. We look forward to his resuming his column soon.]

* Rabbi, Knesseth Israel Congregation, Birmingham, AL.

Rabbi Rube is busy with pressing obligations. During this disruptive period, he is unable to write a Dvar Torah each week. Watch for his Devrei Torah returning soon.

Rav Kook Torah
Eikev: What Does God Want of You?

The Torah expects us to feel both love and awe — Ahavah and Yirah — for God:

> *"And now, Israel, what does God want of you? Only that you be in awe of the Eternal your God, following in all His paths and loving Him...."* (Deut. 10:12)

What is awe of God? Why is this trait so important?

Two Types of Awe

There are different levels of Yirah. There is Yirat Shamayim — awe of Heaven. And there is Yirat Cheit — literally, "fear of sin," but better translated as "repulsion from sin."

These two forms of Yirah share the same root of awe and reverence. Yirat Shamayim is a mindset, expressed in our thoughts and feelings. Yirat Cheit, on the other hand, is more practical, expressed in deed and action. As a result of our perception of God's infinite greatness, we feel reverence towards God — Yirat Shamayim — and are acutely aware of the repugnance of sin — Yirat Cheit.

(There is a third type of fear, Yirat Onesh — "fear of punishment." However, this trait reflects a weak personality. It is not a beneficial trait that should be emulated.)

Love and Awe

Love and Awe are opposite traits. Our attraction to good and holiness — the positive quality of Ahavah — inevitably leads us to wisdom and love. Our revulsion from all that is evil and defiling — the inverse quality of Yirah — helps purify our thoughts and actions.

They are converse traits, yet they are interconnected. Because of our attraction to good, we are repelled by evil. And by avoiding evil, we remain on the path of life, directed towards beneficial aspirations and yearnings.

The Sages disagreed on the basic question: which is the more important trait? Which quality is greater — love of God, or awe of Heaven?

The Talmud (Shabbat 31b) quotes a discussion between Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Simon. The two rabbis were sitting together when a third scholar passed by.

> *Rabbi Elazar turned to Rabbi Simon. "Let us stand up out of respect for this God-fearing individual."*
>
> *Rabbi Simon replied, "Let us stand up for this great scholar of Torah!"*
>
> *Rabbi Elazar did not back down. "I mentioned his greater quality — that he is God-fearing — and you insist on emphasizing a lesser quality!"*

Rabbi Elazar felt that awe of Heaven is the more fundamental trait. He would often say, “The Holy One has only awe of Heaven in His world.” He further declared that awe of God is the basis of all wisdom; in fact, it is the only true wisdom in the world. What does this mean?

The True Foundation

Rabbi Elazar calls our attention to God’s purpose in creating the universe. This is in fact a riddle of sorts. We cannot solve this conundrum by pointing out some advantage gained by creating the world. To posit that creation enabled some positive gain implies that this process brought about improvement and advance. Yet, the height of perfection already existed before creation, with God’s sole existence. What gain could there be in creating the world and its inhabitants?

The benefit in creating the world can only be understood from a negative perspective — in the intended creation of a limited, finite world. That which is finite is naturally drawn towards the infinite. The very limitation of all things in their value and purpose is the ultimate good that the universe receives from its Creator. The loftiest relationship to God is found in this awe-inspiring sense of our distance and insignificance. It is from these feelings of awe that all positive yearnings and love are developed.

When we acquire this form of wisdom, by contemplating the Infinite in order to experience awe and reverence, a lofty Yirat Shamayim makes its mark on the soul. These feelings of awe will generate an intense love for God, a longing to contemplate God’s light and ways, His mitzvot and His Torah.

This is the meaning of Rabbi Elazar’s statement, “The Holy One has only awe of Heaven in His world.” Besides awe, nothing else needs to exist. Nothing else can exist. When the mind’s inner image of reverence expresses itself in the realm of action, it produces a revulsion of sin. By avoiding all obstacles, we may ascend the path towards the elevated light from the Source of life.

This profound image, secreted in the recesses of the mind, identifies the finite nature of the universe as the primary force in both Creation and practical ethical behavior. “Behold, awe of God — that is wisdom!” (Job 28:28). Awe of God is the only true wisdom; it is the foundation for all other studies.

Thus Rabbi Elazar pronounced the trait of Yirat Shamayim to be the most fundamental and inclusive trait. And he honored the passing scholar for possessing this crucial quality.

(Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III, p. 157.)

https://www.ravkooktorah.org/EKEV63.htm

Listen, Really Listen (5778)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z”l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

Some 20 or so years ago, with the help from the Ashdown Foundation, I initiated a conference at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, on the future of Jewish peoplehood. I feared the deepening divisions between secular and ultra-orthodox in Israel, between the various denominations in the Diaspora, and between Israel and the Diaspora themselves.
It was a glittering array of Jewry’s brightest minds: academics from 16 different countries representing all the shadings of Jewish identity. There were professors from Harvard, Yale and Princeton as well as most of Israel’s universities. It was a scintillating success, and at the same time, a total failure.

Halfway through the second day, I turned to my wife Elaine and said, “The speaking is brilliant. The listening is non-existent.” Eventually I could bear it no longer. “Let’s leave,” I said to her. I could not handle yet more skilled presentations from minds that were parti pris, lucid, coherent, but totally closed to ideas that lay outside the radius of their preconceptions. Far from being a set of solutions to the divisions within Jewry, the conference perfectly epitomised the problem.

We decided to travel south to Arad, to meet for the first time the great (and very secular) novelist Amos Oz. I mentioned this to a friend. He winced. “What,” he asked, “do you hope to achieve? Do you really want to convert him?” “No,” I replied, “I want to do something much more important. I want to listen to him.”

And so it was. For two hours we sat in Amos’s book-lined basement study at the edge of the desert, and listened. Out of that meeting came, I believe, a genuine friendship. He stayed secular. I stayed religious. But something magical, transformative, happened nonetheless. We listened to one another.

I cannot speak for Amos, but I can for myself. I felt the presence of a deep mind, a feeling intellect, a master of language – Amos is one of the few people I know incapable of uttering a boring sentence – and one who has wrestled in his own way with what it means to be a Jew. Since then I have had a public dialogue with him, and another with his daughter Fania Oz-Salzberger. But it began with an act of sustained, focused listening.

Shema is one of the key words of the book of Devarim, where it appears no less than 92 times. It is, in fact, one of the key words of Judaism as a whole. It is central to the two passages that form the first two paragraphs of the prayer we call the Shema,[1] one in last week’s parsha, the other in this week’s.

What is more: it is untranslatable. It means many things: to hear, to listen, to pay attention, to understand, to internalise and to respond. It is the closest biblical Hebrew comes to a verb that means “to obey.”

In general, when you encounter a word in any language that is untranslatable into your own, you are close to the beating pulse of that culture. To understand an untranslatable word, you have to be prepared to move out of your comfort zone and enter a mindset that is significantly different from yours.

At the most basic level, Shema represents that aspect of Judaism that was most radical in its day: that God cannot be seen. He can only be heard. Time and again Moses warns against making or worshipping any physical representation of the Divine. As he tells the people: It is a theme that runs through the Bible. Moses insistently reminds the people that at Mount Sinai: “The Lord spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice” (Deut. 4:12). Even when Moses mentions seeing, he is really talking about listening. A classic example occurs in the opening verses of next week’s parsha:

> *See [re’eh], I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse – the blessing if you listen [tishme’u] to the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you do not listen [lo tishme’u] to the commands of the Lord your God.* Deut. 11:26-28

This affects our most basic metaphors of knowing. To this day, in English, virtually all our words for understanding or intellect are governed by the metaphor of sight. We speak of insight, hindsight, foresight, vision and imagination. We speak of people being perceptive, of making an observation, of adopting a perspective. We say, “it appears that.” When we understand something, we say, “I see.”[2] This entire linguistic constellation is the legacy of the philosophers of ancient Greece, the supreme example in all history of a visual culture.

Judaism, by contrast, is a culture of the ear more than the eye. As Rabbi David Cohen, the disciple of Rav Kook known as ‘the Nazirite,’ pointed out in his book, Kol ha-Nevuah, the Babylonian Talmud consistently uses the metaphor of hearing. So when a proof is brought, it says Ta shma, ‘Come and hear.’ When it speaks of inference it says, Shema mina, ‘Hear from this.’ When someone disagrees with an argument, it says Lo shemiyah leih, ‘he could not hear it.’ When it draws a conclusion it says, Mashma, ‘from this it can be heard.’ Maimonides calls the oral tradition, Mipi hashemua, ‘from the mouth of that which was heard.’ In Western culture understanding is a form of seeing. In Judaism it is a form of listening.

What Moses is telling us throughout Devarim is that God does not seek blind obedience. The fact that there is no word for 'obedience' in biblical Hebrew, in a religion of 613 commands, is stunning in itself (modern Hebrew had to borrow a verb, letzayet, from Aramaic). He wants us to listen, not just with our ears but with the deepest resources of our minds. If God had simply sought obedience, he would have created robots, not human beings with a will of their own. Indeed if He had simply sought obedience, He would have been content with the company of angels, who constantly sing God's praises and always do His will.

God, in making human beings "in His image," was creating otherness. And the bridge between self and other is conversation: speaking and listening. When we speak, we tell others who and what we are. But when we listen, we allow others to tell us who they are. This is the supremely revelatory moment. And if we can't listen to other people, then we certainly can't listen to God, whose otherness is not relative but absolute.

Hence the urgency behind Moses' double emphasis in this week's parsha, the opening line of the second paragraph of the Shema: "If you indeed heed [shamo'a tishme'u] my commands with which I charge you today, to love the Lord your God and worship Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 11:13). A more forceful translation might be: "If you listen – and I mean really listen."

One can almost imagine the Israelites saying to Moses, "OK. Enough already. We hear you," and Moses replying, "No you don't. You simply don't understand what is happening here. The Creator of the entire universe is taking a personal interest in your welfare and destiny: you, the smallest of all nations and by no means the most righteous. Have you any idea of what that means?" Perhaps we still don't. [emphasis added]

Listening to another human being, let alone God, is an act of opening ourselves up to a mind radically other than our own. This takes courage. To listen is to make myself vulnerable. My deepest certainties may be shaken by entering into the mind of one who thinks quite differently about the world. But it is essential to our humanity. It is the antidote to narcissism: the belief that we are the centre of the universe. It is also the antidote to the fundamentalist mindset characterised by the late Professor Bernard Lewis as, "I'm right; you're wrong; go to hell."[3]

Listening is a profoundly spiritual act. It can also be painful. It is comfortable not to have to listen, not to be challenged, not to be moved outside our comfort zone. Nowadays, courtesy of Google filters, Facebook friends, and the precise targeting of individuals made possible by the social media, it is easy to live in an echo-chamber in which we only get to hear the voices of those who share our views. But, as I said in a TED lecture last year, "It's the people not like us who make us grow."

Hence the life-changing idea: Listening is the greatest gift we can give to another human being. To be listened to, to be heard, is to know that someone else takes me seriously. That is a redemptive act.

Twenty years ago I sat in a lecture hall in a university in Jerusalem and listened to a series of great minds not listening to one another. I concluded that the divisions in the Jewish world were not about to heal, and would never heal until we understood the deep spiritual truth in Moses' challenge: "If you listen – and I mean, really listen." [emphasis added]

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Technically, reciting the Shema is not an act of prayer at all. It is a fundamentally different type of action: it is an act of Talmud Torah, of learning Torah (see Menahot 99b). In prayer, we speak to God. In study we listen to God.

[2] See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By,* University of Chicago Press, 1980.
[3] Bernard Lewis, "I'm right; you're wrong; go to hell," The Atlantic, May 2003.

* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar.

https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/eikev/listen-really-listen/

The Little Moses in You

By Yossy Goldman * © Chabad 2022

How will we be judged when we get to the Heavenly Court? Will the criteria be objective or subjective? Is there one rule of thumb for everyone, or will we be judged by our own personal strengths and struggles?

Life is very confusing. Even following the Torah is not always a simple matter.

“Thou shalt not steal,” it is written. Of course not. But never? What about a parent who needs life-saving medicine for his or her child and the only way to get it is by robbing the pharmacy? Is it still forbidden?

Or what about the commandment to distance ourselves from falsehood? May we never tell a lie? What if a Nazi asks if you’re Jewish and lying may save your life?

Even when it comes to smaller things, our Sages teach that to keep the peace, certain small white lies may sometimes be permissible.

Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky,1 who founded the Zionist Revisionist movement and was Menachem Begin’s ideological mentor, was attending a cocktail party. As the story goes, he complimented one of the women on her appearance. The woman was rather frank and responded to Jabotinsky, who was not a particularly handsome fellow, “I wish I could say the same for you, Mr. Jabotinsky.”

“Why not?” asked Jabotinsky. “Do what I do. Tell a lie.”

Whether it’s about being honest, or painfully honest, life is not always simple. And doing the right thing is not always as straightforward as we may think.

Let’s examine an interesting dialogue in this week’s Torah portion, in which Moses continues addressing his people prior to his demise. He tells them that G d’s expectations of them are not beyond their capabilities.

> *“And now, Israel, what does the L rd your G d request of you? Only to fear Him, and to follow His ways...” 2*

The Talmud famously asks 3 “Is fearing G d a small thing?” People have been striving to achieve that level of piety for millennia and, when they do, it is no small feat. What does Moses mean when he says, “What does G d ask of you (already)?” How can he minimize the matter of being a G d-fearing Jew?

And the Talmud answers, “Yes. For Moses, to be G d-fearing is a small matter.” For a man of his spiritual stature, to be G d-fearing is a very modest accomplishment. He had achieved so much more in his relationship with G d.

Now, let me ask you. Are you satisfied with the Talmud’s answer? What kind of answer is it? Was Moses talking to himself? Did he not appreciate that he was talking to his people, ordinary mortals of far lesser spiritual stature? For such people, being G d-fearing is not a simple matter at all. It is extremely challenging. Did the great prophet not know his audience?

I think we can find some insight here by consulting the Tanya4, where Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the Alter Rebbe, asks this very question.

And this is his profound answer: In every Jewish soul there exists a spark of Moses. And in every generation, there is a Moses who imparts that inspiration to the people of his time. And when we consider that spark of Moses inside us, when we look at the essence of G dliness in the deep recesses of our core, then we will realize that to be G d-fearing is but "a small thing." And it is to that little piece of Moses inside every Jew that Moses was directing his remarks. If we only scrape the surface of our inner self, we will discover layers and layers of spirituality and connectedness within us. And it's there for the taking.

So, yes, life can often be confusing; and doing the right thing may not always seem simple. But we can do it, because we have boundless potential. The sky is not the limit. By virtue of that little spark of Moses within us, we can reach the infinite. Never mind being G d-fearing, we can be so bound up with G d that there are, literally, no limits, no constraints, and no ceilings whatsoever.

At the end of the day, we will all be judged fairly and fittingly, according to our own strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures. We will all be evaluated by our own personal talents, faculties, gifts, and potential—developed or dormant.

But one thing is for sure. We have a lot more potential than we can even imagine. We can be G d-fearing individuals and so much more. We can come to love and appreciate the truths of Judaism and its traditions. We can enjoy a meaningful spiritual relationship with G d. We can achieve the world, and beyond.

Because inside us all is a little Moses. And for Moses it is but a small thing.

FOOTNOTES:

1. 1880 – 1940.

2. Deuteronomy 10:12.

3. Berachot 33b

4. Chapter 42.

***** Founding director of the first Chabad in South Africa (1976). Since 1986, rabbi of the iconic Sydenham Shul, where he is now Life Rabbi Emeritus. He is also president of the South African Rabbinical Association**.**

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/5600618/jewish/The-Little-Moses-in-You.htm

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Eikev: Shabbat: Imitating G-d

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

Moses promised the Jewish people that if they would keep G d's commandments, imitate His goodness, and cleave to the sages of the Torah, G d would enable them to successfully drive out the nations that were occupying the Land of Israel.

Imitating G-d

[*Moses told the Jewish people] to walk in [G d's] ways.* Deuteronomy 11:22

The sages of the Talmud explain that this phrase means that we are intended to imitate G d's goodness. "Just as He is merciful, so should you be merciful; just as He performs acts of loving-kindness, so should you perform acts of loving-kindness." But inasmuch as G d's goodness is infinite, how can we be expected to imitate Him?

The answer is that it is for this very reason that G d created us in His image. As such, we indeed possess G d's infinite potential to do good. (Hitva'aduyot 5746, vol. 2, p. 387).

https://www.chabad.org/dailystudy/dailywisdom_cdo/aid/2955522/jewish/Shabbat-Imitating-G-d.htm

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Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Covenant and the Love

An interesting phrase appears at the end of last week's parsha and at the beginning of this week's, and they are the only places where it appears in the Torah. The phrase is ha-brit veha-chessed (Deuteronomy 7:9) or in this week's parsha, et ha-brit ve-et ha-chessed (Deut. 7:12).

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping the brit and the chessed to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments. (Deut. 7:9)

If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep the brit and the chessed with you, as He swore to your ancestors. (Deut. 7:12)

The phrase is strange. The relationship between God and Israel is defined by brit, covenant. That, essentially, is the content of the Torah. What then is added by the word chessed?

The translators have a problem with it. The Jewish Publication Society's translation of the opening verse of our parsha is: "And if you do obey these rules and observe them carefully, the Lord your God will maintain faithfully for you the covenant that He made on oath with your fathers." This translates chessed as "faithfully" and takes it as a qualification of the verb "maintain" or "keep". This is a very stretched translation.

A non-Jewish translation, the New International Version, translates ha-brit veha-chessed as "covenant of love." This is a very Christian translation. The covenant entered into between the Israelites and God was a covenant of law, not just of love.

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, in The Living Torah, got it right when he translated it as "God your Lord will keep the covenant and love with which He made an oath to your fathers." Not "covenant of love" but "covenant and love." But still: what is the covenant, and what is the love that is distinct from the covenant?

This might seem a minor matter were it not for the fact that this phrase, which is rare in Tanach, makes an appearance at key moments of Jewish history. For example, it figures in King Solomon's great prayer at the consecration of the Temple in Jerusalem:

"Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in Heaven above or on Earth below—You who keep the covenant and love with Your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way." (1 Kings 8:23)

When, after the Babylonian exile, the nation gathered around Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem and renewed the covenant, they said:

"Now therefore, our God, the great God, mighty and awesome, who keeps His covenant and love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in Your eyes—the hardship that has come on us, on our kings and leaders, on our Priests and Prophets, on our ancestors and all Your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today. (Neh. 9:32)

At these critical moments, when Moses renewed the covenant on the banks of the Jordan, when Solomon dedicated the Temple, and the people in Ezra and Nehemiah's time rededicated themselves, they took care to define the relationship between God and the people as one of brit and chessed, covenant and love. It seems that both are necessary, or they would not have used this language on these three defining occasions many centuries apart.

What then is the meaning of chessed? Significantly, Maimonides dedicates the penultimate chapter of The Guide for the Perplexed to the analysis of three words: chessed, tzedakah and mishpat. On chessed he says:

In our Commentary on Pirkei Avot (5:7) we have explained the expression chessed as denoting excess. It is especially used of extraordinary kindness. Loving-kindness is practised in two ways: first, we show kindness to those who have no claim whatever upon us; secondly, we are kind to those to whom it is due, in a greater measure than is due to them … The very act of creation is an act of God's loving-kindness: "I have said, 'The universe is built in loving-kindness'" (Ps. 89:3)…[1]

The difference between the three terms is that I am legally entitled to mishpat. I am morally entitled to tzedakah. But to chessed, I am not entitled at all. When someone acts toward me in chessed, that is an act of pure grace. I have done nothing to deserve it.

Maimonides notes, citing the phrase from Psalms that "The universe is built in lovingkindness," that creation was an act of pure chessed. No one ever creates something because it deserves to be created. Creations do not exist before they are created.

We can define this in human terms more precisely. The book of Ruth is known as the work, par excellence, of chessed: "Rabbi Zeira said, 'This book does not have anything in it concerned with impurity or purity, forbidden or permitted. Why then was it written? To teach us the greatness of the reward for acts of chessed."[2]

There are two key scenes in the book. The first occurs when Naomi, bereaved of her husband and two sons, decides to return to Israel. She says to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me…" She was telling them that they had no further obligations toward her. They had been married to her sons, but now they are widows. Naomi has no other sons. Being Moabite women, they will be strangers in Israel: they have no reason to go there. You owe me nothing, she is saying. You have been kind, you have been good daughters-in-law, but now we must go our separate ways.

The second speech occurs when Ruth has gone to gather grain in the field of Boaz, who treats her with great care and consideration. She asks him: "Why have I found such recognition in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" The two key words here are "recognition" and "foreigner." "Recognition" means that you have behaved toward me as if you had obligations to me. But "I am a foreigner." The word used here is not "stranger," i.e. a resident

alien to whom certain duties are owed. It means, a complete outsider. Ruth is saying to Boaz, you do not owe me anything.

That is what makes Ruth the supreme book of chessed, that is, of good done to another who has no claim whatsoever upon you. What Ruth does for Naomi, and what Boaz does for Ruth, are not mishpat or tzedakah. They are pure chessed.

Now let us return to the question with which we began. Why did Moses, and Solomon, and Nehemiah define the relationship between the Jewish people and God not in terms of a single concept, covenant, but added to it a second idea, namely chessed, meaning an act of love.

Covenant is essentially reciprocal. Two people or entities pledge themselves to one another, each committing to a responsibility. This is how it was defined by God at Mount Sinai: "Now if you obey me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession, for all the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5). If you are My people, I will be your God. If you serve me, I will bless you. Every covenant has an if-then quality to it. Therefore, every covenant is inherently vulnerable. That is what Moses emphasised throughout Devarim. Don't take the land or its blessings for granted. If you do well, things will go well, but if you do badly, great dangers lie in store.

That is covenant. Chessed, in contrast, has no if-then quality. It is given out of the goodness of the giver, regardless of the worth of the recipient. When Moses, Solomon and Nehemiah referred to chessed in addition to the covenant, they were making an implicit request of God of the most fundamental significance. Even if we fail to honour the covenant, please God be gracious to us, for You are good even when we are not, and You do good even when we do not deserve it, when we have no claim on You whatsoever – ki le-olam chasdo, for His chessed is eternal.

The verses in our parsha sound conditional: "If you pay attention to these laws … then the Lord your God will keep the brit and the chessed …" This suggests that we will be shown chessed if we deserve it, but if not, not. But it isn't so. At the end of the curses in Bechukotai, God says: "Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them: I am the Lord their God."

God will never break the covenant, even if we do, because of His chessed. Tanach describes the relationship between God and Israel in two primary ways: like a husband and wife, and like a parent and a child. Between husband and wife there can be a divorce. Between parent and child there cannot be. They may be estranged, but the parent is still their parent and the child is still their child. Marriage is a covenant; parenthood is not. Do not forsake us, we say to God, because whatever we have done, You are our parent and we are Your children. Chessed is the kind of love a parent has for a child, whether they deserve it or not. Chessed is unconditional grace.

I believe that chessed is the highest achievement of the moral life. It is what Ruth did for Naomi, and Boaz for Ruth, and from that kindness came David, Israel's greatest king. Reciprocal altruism – I do this for you, and you do this for me – is universal among social animals. Chessed is not. In chessed God created the universe. In chessed we create moments of moral beauty that bring joy and hope where there was darkness and despair.

[1] The Guide for the Perplexed, III:53.
[2] Ruth Rabbah 2:14.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"And it shall come to pass, because you hearken to these laws, safeguarding and keeping them, that the Lord your God shall keep the covenant with you and the mercy that He swore unto your ancestors, and He will love you, and bless you…in the land which He swore to your ancestors to give you" (Deuteronomy 7:12–13).

How secure can world Jewry – and the citizens of Israel – feel about the future of the Jewish State? Have we returned to Israel for good, or does this "third commonwealth" represent only a possible opportunity, its long-term stability dependent on the moral, ethical, and spiritual commitment of its residents?

In this week's portion of Ekev we find two passages that, at first glance, seem to contradict each other concerning this issue. The first passage, cited above, speaks for itself: our entire relationship to the land depends on our fidelity to the terms of the covenant. In fact, the opening word of the portion, "Ekev," is a conditional term (the desired goal will result "because" – "ekev"), underscoring the theme of qualification.

If the Jewish People were to forsake the covenant, they would have to pay the price of not inheriting the land. If they uphold the covenant, then God will bless them in the land that He promised our ancestors. The observance of the commandments may be compared to mortgage payments; if you default on the mortgage, the property gets taken away.

However, the Torah continues: "Not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart did you go to possess their land; but it was because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drove them out before you" (ibid., 9:5).

Here the Almighty presents a different approach to our right to the land; it has less to do with our worthiness, and more to do with our neighbors' lack of worthiness. We are being judged in comparison to the nations around us rather than in the absolute terms of our own conduct.

To reconcile these passages, Rabbi Hayyim Ibn Attar ("Or HaHayyim HaKadosh") distinguishes between two stages in the redemptive process: entering the Land of Israel, and remaining there for good.

Our initial entry into the land comes about as a result of the evil of the other nations rather than our own righteousness, as well as God's promise to the Patriarchs. But whether or not we remain on the land, whether a particular "return" will become the anticipated redemption or a mere passing episode, depends solely upon our ethical, moral, and spiritual conduct, as indicated by the initial verse of our Torah reading.

There is also an alternate (and more comforting) way to orchestrate these verses, as Ohr HaHayyim explains. Initially, when the Almighty makes His covenantal guarantee that the descendants of Abraham will inherit the promised land, He stipulates that as soon as the Canaanites demonstrate totally unacceptable moral behavior, "in the fourth generation, they [the Jewish People] will return here" (Genesis 15:16).

Then the Torah outlines the ultimate boundaries of Israel: "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham saying, 'Unto your seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates'" (v. 18).

Hence, Ohr HaHayyim suggests that whether or not we prove ourselves worthy, God promises that He will take us out of Egypt and out of every enslavement and bring us to our homeland, unconditionally.

But how much of the Promised Land comes into our possession – whether or not we get to inherit the full boundaries from the Nile to the Euphrates – depends upon our actions and morality. And what is clear from the second interpretation of Ohr HaHayyim is that our ability – or worthiness – to remain on Israeli soil is not an "all-or-nothing" situation. If we are partially good, we have a good chance of remaining on a goodly portion of Israel.

This second interpretation is much more optimistic and heartening for us today; but it also teaches us that if we are forced to give up parts of the land, we may be receiving an important message from Above that our behavior is not what it ought to be – especially in terms of how we behave towards each other. It is because of His compassionate righteousness that the Almighty initially chose Abraham (ibid., 18:19) and because of Israel's lack thereof that our Holy Temple was destroyed (Isaiah 1).

Nahmanides explains that after the destruction of the first Temple, God guaranteed that He would effectuate deliverance no matter what. After the second destruction, there would also be a deliverance, but it would be dependent upon our doing teshuva, upon our repentance. According to Maimonides, this act of repentance is not a commandment, but is rather a guarantee. God promises that we will repent and then we will be redeemed. Obviously, the sooner we repent the sooner will come the redemption, but the Almighty guarantees that redemption will arrive!

Dvar Torah
Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

God demands that we should all fear Him. But is it possible then, for us to have a healthy relationship with Him?

In Parshat Eikev, Moshe brings the word of Hashem to the people (Devarim 10:12):
"Mah Hashem Elokeicha shoel meimach?" – "What is it that the Lord your God wants of you?"
"Ki im leyirah et Hashem Elokeicha," – "But always to fear the Lord your God."

What do we mean here by fearing Hashem? The Maharsha in his commentary on the Gemara Masechet Berachot 33b differentiates between two types of 'yirah', two types of fear. The first he calls 'yirat haonesh', fear of punishment. This type of fear, he said, is not the healthiest. That is to say when I'm in a state of dread, I don't want to do what is wrong because I fear the possible repercussions. The Maharsha however says that there is a different type of 'yirah'. It is 'yirat harommemut', in which we have a sense of awe, of reverence for Hashem. We recognise His greatness and his place in our life as a result of which we cleave to Him with love and as a result of our passion for Him and what He represents, we want to do the right thing for our own sake, and for the sake of others.

It is for this reason that in Hebrew, the words for fearing and seeing come from the same root. And that's because by 'seeing' Hashem's role in this world, by 'seeing' that He's there to help us through and His love for us – as a result we have enormous reverence for Him. And that therefore provides for an exceptionally healthy relationship through which we are motivated to follow the word of Hashem, not because we fear punishment but rather because we delight in the incredible opportunities that a life of Torah and mitzvot provides for us.

Let us therefore motivate our children and grandchildren to follow the word of Hashem not because they're in dread of anything but rather because they have the privilege of a life filled with that incredible gift of Torah and mitzvot.

Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel
Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*

The Importance of How Things Look or What People Think

In our Torah portion, Moses recalls the grave sin of the Golden Calf, and how God's initial reaction was to destroy the Jewish people as a result. In praying to God to save the lives of the people, what possible defense could Moshe offer? In our Parsha (Deuteronomy 9:28), Moshe says that if God carries you His plan and destroys the Jews, the nations will think and say that God was Not powerful enough to bring the people into the Land of Israel and conquer it. This is the same argument Moses again used when the Jews sinned again, and believed in the Spies, and God again wished to destroy the people (Numbers 14:15). Both times, God relented, Why didn't God destroy the Jews, as they certainly deserved this punishment? God explains: "because of Moshe's words (argument)" (Numbers 14:20). Even though the idea that God is too weak is totally absurd, yet, because some non-Jews would have believed this absurdity and the motive behind why God destroyed the Jews, God backed off. And God did not destroy the people (twice) because of this argument. Thus, we see that God (and Judaism) indeed give credence to what people believe, even if those beliefs are ludicrous logically. Had God ignored this argument by Moshe, there would not a be a Jewish people alive today learning these words in our Torah portion.

As we were growing up, most of us heard a variation of the following "rules" from our parents: Do the right thing. I do not care what your friends are doing. You have to behave properly. ("If all the other kids jumped off a bridge, would you do it too?") It makes no difference what other people think, as long as you do the right thing. The first two statements seem to be concepts that everyone can agree on: act morally and resist peer pressure. But is the last statement really the ideal? Should people not care what others think of them or their actions? If each individual acts ethically in a given situation, but it looks unethical to others, should people still take that action? Is it really ethical and moral to not be concerned about how people react to the manner in which other individuals conduct themselves? Judaism has much to say about these questions and this moral issue.

Judaism Very Much Cares What Others Think About Our Actions - In Judaism, how people react to a Jew's action is indeed very important. The very essence of being Jewish is how one impacts not only upon oneself but also upon others. Therefore, to consider the reaction of others as unimportant is to contradict a fundamental precept in Judaism, because it does not allow a Jew to fulfill his or her overall mission. The very first Jew, Abraham, is promised by God that he will be a blessing to all people of the world, not just for Jews. This indicates that others would aspire to be like Abraham (Genesis 12:3 with Rashi commentary). Every action that Abraham took was scrutinized by others, and rightly so. Had Abraham acted in a way that would have affected people negatively, he would not have been able to succeed in his goal to inspire others to believe in one God. This is not just Abraham's mission, but it is also the mission of every Jew. Therefore, the Talmud (Yoma 86a) explains how a person fulfills one of the main guiding principles of Judaism: "You shall love God with all your heart..." (Deuteronomy 6:5). A Jew is obligated to act in a manner that will cause people to say how great this person is and how special God must be to inspire such behavior.

How Far Some People Went So That Other People Would Not Think Them Sinful - There are numerous incidents related in the Talmud describing how people and families went "the extra mile" in their actions, in order to ensure that they would be above suspicion, even when they had done absolutely nothing wrong. For example, the family of Garmu was responsible for baking the dough, of the finest quality, for the Lechem Hapanim-Bread of Display for the Temple. The Rabbis praised them because this family consciously would not allow any clean flour to enter their own homes, so that no one would suspect them of using the dough designated for the Temple for their own needs (Yoma 38a). Abba Hoshiya was a launderer, who made sure to always wear clothing made of a special type of cotton (not commonly found), so that people could not say that when he washed their clothes, he took little pieces of material from them and made a garment for himself (Jerusalem Talmud, Bava Kama 44b). The family of Avtinas was responsible for mixing the spices that created the incense in the Temple (Yoma 38a). The Rabbis praised them because whenever a woman in their family got married, she would not wear any perfume at all at the wedding, and when the men in the family got married, they made sure that their brides would not wear perfume as well. They did all this so that they would be above suspicion that they may have used the spices meant for the Temple incense for their personal use. Moses was responsible for both building the Mishkan-Tabernacle and keeping the accounts for all the gifts and how they were used. Even though no accounting of each donation was required, Moses insisted on giving a detailed public accounting so that even he, the great and respected leader, would be above suspicion that he took some of the donations for his personal use (Midrash Tanchuma, Pikudei 5).

The obligation to act in a manner that eliminates suspicion, even when a person does nothing wrong, is so important, that Jewish law required that anyone who entered the Temple area where the money was stored, had to wear clothing without pockets, and forbade any garments that contained any other places that might be used to stash coins. Thus, the person had to go in barefoot, since coins could be stored in shoes. Similarly, one could not

wear a coat or even an amulet, or any other type of clothing that might allow a person to store a coin. In this way, if the person later became wealthy, no one could attribute this wealth to money stolen from the Temple (Mishna Shekalim 3:2).

How This Concept Relates Specifically To Jewish Law - As a result of this idea, there are many instances in daily Jewish living when a person acts in complete accordance with Jewish law (Halacha), but to someone else, a particular action might look like a sin that violates Jewish law. If that situation arises, the person is forbidden from doing that action, even though it would normally be permitted by Halacha. When a normally permitted act is prohibited because someone else may think it is a sin, it is called either Marit Ayin or Cheshad in Jewish law. There are numerous examples of this in the Talmud and in the codes of Jewish law, and, as usual, there is some disagreement about the finer points of these actions, even though all agree to the basic principle. Only a few examples will be brought here.

One classic case is the person who gets caught in the rain on Shabbat, and his clothing is soaking wet. It is perfectly permissible to put these clothing out in the sun to dry, without violating any Shabbat laws. But if people see these clothes drying, they may suspect that the person washed them on Shabbat, which is forbidden. Thus, the Mishna states (Mishna Shabbat 22:4) that any individual may not dry these clothes in the sun on Shabbat in a place where people can see them (because they might suspect that individual washed them on Shabbat). But in the privacy of one's backyard, the clothing may be laid out to dry. Another classic case in the Talmud (Shabbat 23a) is the person who lives in a corner house, with windows facing two different streets. If that homeowner lights Chanukah candles in the windows facing one street, he has completely fulfilled the Mitzvah-commandment of lighting Chanukah candles. But people who pass by only on the other street will see no candles in those windows, and possibly think that this man has not lit Chanukah candles and has sinned by neglecting a Rabbinical Mitzvah. Therefore, our concept – caring what others think even when doing the right thing -- obligates him to light candles in both windows, so that no one should think he has sinned by forgetting to light the Menorah. Other examples abound. For instance, the eating or drinking of both human and animal blood is forbidden in Jewish law, but the blood of fish is permitted. If a person wanted, for some reason, to drink the blood of a fish (in some places this is considered a delicacy), it would be forbidden to do so even though there is nothing forbidden about this act. Since people might assume it is blood that came from an animal, it is forbidden. However, if there is some sign that it is from fish -- i.e., some fish bones or other parts of the fish were lying next to it, then it is permitted (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 66:9).

Similarly, if the coins in a person's pocket happened to fall on the ground in front of a statue of an idol, which some people consider a god, it would be forbidden to bend down and pick them up. Even though that Jew has no intention to do so, others looking at this scene might think that he or she is bowing down to an idol and thus it is forbidden. Likewise, is the case of a water fountain located near the statue of an idol. If bending down is required to reach the water, some may think the drinker is bending down to worship, and therefore, it would be forbidden to drink from that fountain (Avodah Zara 12a). That is how far this concept extends and how seriously Judaism takes this idea.

Applying These Ideas To Jewish Living In The 21st Century - The ideas of Marit Ayin and Cheshad raise many practical questions for Jews of the 21st century. With modern inventions, many new situations arise where the actions themselves are not forbidden but may appear to be so to others, and these situations obviously change with time and with perceptions. (For example, in the early 1900's, the idea of a Shabbat clock turning out the lights on Friday night would have been a problem of Marit Ayin, but now it is known that this is done in most observant Jews' homes. Therefore, seeing lights go out in such homes on Shabbat would not be Marit Ayin today.) Concerning the subject of food alone, many questions abound: Would it be permissible to bake rolls for Pesach that look like bread, using Matza meal that is completely Kosher for Pesach? People might think that it is bread, which is now permitted on Passover, or that the person eating such a roll is committing a sin. Similarly, food producers already have made vegetarian "pork" that looks and tastes like the "Traif" original, even if they are supervised by a Rabbi? Clocks and other electronic devices can automatically do many actions that are forbidden on Shabbat. While technically permitted, people might think that a Jew performed these actions himself rather than relied on the machines. Are they permitted or not? The Rabbis of today have discussed these and other issues, too important to describe simply, and need a separate column unto itself .

Already in the 1600's, an Italian Rabbi came up against many of these questions, and Rabbi Da Silva (1656-1695) ruled (Pri Chadash on Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 461:2) that only those specific Marit Ayin cases mentioned in the Talmud and in the previous books of Jewish law should be respected and observed. But about new cases, such as the baking of Kosher for Passover items that look like Chametz (leavened products), one need not worry. The Encyclopedia Talmudit seems to agree with this overall analysis (Encyclopedia Talmudit, vol. 17 "Cheshad-Marit Ayin"). Of course, many twentieth and twenty-first century Rabbis were asked specific questions and wrote Responsa that are very instructive, not only for Jewish law, but for the ethics and morality of this overall concept.

Rabbi Moses Feinstein, the "dean" of Jewish law in the United States in the twentieth century, writes about a number of situations which presented themselves and relate to the concepts discussed. One example will be cited here. Since a married Jewish woman is supposed to cover her hair according to Jewish law, many women today cover their hair with wigs made of human hair, which is permitted by almost all Halachik (Jewish law) authorities. But what if the wig is so professional looking that it appears as if it is the woman's own hair? People might think that she is violating this law by not covering her hair, even though she is actually keeping the law. May she still wear the wig in this situation? Rabbi Feinstein says (Responsa Igrot Moshe, Even Ha-ezer 2:12) women may indeed wear such wigs today for several reasons. First, it is already well known that many religious women wear wigs, in order to fulfill the requirement to cover their own hair, so that most people who see this woman and know she is an observant Jewess in all other areas, will not suspect her in this area. Then he says that if one looks carefully, it is indeed possible to see that this is a wig. Finally, he reiterates the words of Rabbi Da Silva and says that today we do not forbid what was not forbidden by the Rabbis of the Talmudic or Gaonic periods.

The specifics of each situation, and how people perceive each circumstance, determine the proper Jewish response. However, Jews should constantly be aware that that they are being watched, and how their actions are understood, rightly or wrongly, by other Jews and non-Jews, helps determine if the action itself if even permitted or forbidden.

*** This column has been adapted from a series of volumes written by Rabbi Dr. Nachum Amsel "*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Values*" available from Urim and Amazon. For the full article or to review all the footnotes in the original, contact the author at nachum@jewishdestiny.com**

Ohr Torah Stone Dvar Torah

Reinventing the Covenant – Judgment, Mercy, and Second Chances - Tamar Beer

The concept of "shmartem et hamitzvot" – observing or safeguarding the commandments – appears many times throughout Parshat Eikev. However, the reasons for safeguarding the mitzvot vary throughout its numerous mentions. Moshe gives a speech to Bnei Yisrael in order to instruct them and lift their spirits before entering the land of Israel. What is the role of advising Bnei Yisrael to "observe the mitzvot" so many times?

In the opening of the parsha, Bnei Yisrael is told: "u'shmartem v'asitem et habrit v'hachesed asher nishba lavotecha"– that Bnei

Yisrael should safeguard and perform the covenant and the kindness that HaShem swore to your forefathers (7:12). Here, the safeguarding of the covenant – acting in the ways that God commands – is portrayed as a sense of basic reciprocity. HaShem entered a covenant with our forefathers promising them the land of Israel, provided they hold up their end of the deal by acting properly and following in His ways. It therefore follows that the next instance where Bnei Yisrael is instructed to follow the mitzvot is "l'maan tichiyun u'rivitem u'vatem vyirashem et ha'aretz asher nishba Hashem la'avotechem"– in order that you shall live, and be many, and come and inherit the land that HaShem swore to your forefathers (8:1). Here, Moshe is reminding the nation that although HaShem promised their forefathers to make them into a great nation in the land of Israel, it is conditional on Bnei Yisrael doing their part of the covenant by acting in the ways of the mitzvot. In 8:6, Bnei Yisrael is told "v'shmarta et hamitzvot HaShem Elokecha lalechet laderech u'liyirah oto– that we should observe the mitzvot of HaShem in order to walk in His path, and to fear Him. This pasuk sets up observing the mitzvot as the path one must take in order to live a Godly life, and to demonstrate a fear of HaShem and His word.

In these instances of Moshe telling Bnei Yisrael to follow the mitzvot, he is reminding them that our duty to follow the mitzvot is our end of a covenant HaShem set up with our forefathers, in order to achieve peoplehood in the land of Israel. HaShem guaranteed our forefathers that they would become a great nation, however, this promise can only be actualized when we are acting in the manner that God commanded. It therefore is fitting that Moshe instructs the nation to observe and safeguard the mitzvot as part of his speech before entering the land – these are the actions the nation must take in order to be worthy in the next step of their journey: settling in the land of Israel.

However, Moshe seemingly interrupts his chizzuk by recollecting the first and second luchot. This in itself is puzzling, but what is also interesting is that after this interruption, there is a tone shift in reference to the many mentions of "shmartem et hamitzvot"- observing the mitzvot. At this point, the emphasis shifts from following the mitzvot out of national obligation, to the personal effect the mitzvot have on us. We are told to observe the mitzvot "ki tov lach"- because they are good for us – and "lma'an techzeku u'vatem v'yarashtem et ha'arez"- in order to strengthen us to come and inherit the land (10:13, 11:18). We are also told "v'ahavta et hashem elokecha v'sharmtem mishmortav"- that we should love HaShem and keep his mitzvot- which sets up an ideal that observing the mitzvot should flow naturally from a love of God.

The tension between these two types of descriptions of "shmartem et hamitzvot" found in the first and second half of Parshat Eikev, well represents the tension of how one should regard the safeguarding of the mitzvot in his or her own life. On the one hand, following the mitzvot is our most basic way of doing our part in fulfilling our end of the covenant in order to be worthy of living as HaShem's nation on the land of Israel- it is our duty as the Jewish people. On the other hand, there is a recognition that a sense of national responsibility is not the full reason as to why a person should observe the mitzvot. In order to be properly oriented towards the path of mitzvot, we need to understand and appreciate how the mitzvot are meaningful to our lives. We need to relate to mitzvot not simply as a duty, but as an act we perform out of love of God, and a recognition that mitzvot are here to benefit us and affect us.

It is important to reflect on the luchot in order to transition from the obligation of mitzvot to the love of mitzvot. Obligation reflects a sense of justice – that we should follow the mitzvot and uphold our end of the covenant, but rachamim – mercy, and love – which lie beyond the strict measure of din – are also elements of our relationship to HaShem. The first luchot were founded on "din"- adhering to the letter of the law. They set up expectations for the nation that were not lived up to; instead, Bnei Yisrael sinned with the golden calf. After the luchot were broken, it stands to reason that if the luchot were broken, the covenant they represented between Bnei Yisrael and HaShem should be broken, too.

However, God does not function on justice alone. Because of His love for His people, He also acts in a manner of mercy, allowing us to have second chances we do not deserve, provided that we do teshuva. Therefore, he offers a covenant anew, in the form of the second luchot. The theme of teshuva in the story of the luchot is hinted at by Rashi, who points out that the second luchot were given on Yom Kippur. Furthermore, the pesukim tell us that Hashem said "shnei luchot k'rishonim"– the two luchot were like the first. What does it mean that they were like the first, if the text of the second luchot was different? Perhaps we should learn from this that if we make a mistake, but rectify it afterwards, then our relationship with Hashem will be as good as it was before the wrong deed was done.

The story of the luchot is not here to sadden Bnei Yisrael in reminding them that they sinned with the golden calf. Rather, it is here as a reminder in entering the land, that if Bnei Yisrael sins, they can repair their relationship with HaShem, they can re-establish the covenant. It is important to remember the responsibility to follow the mitzvot and the consequences of one's own actions, but if mistakes are made and wrong actions are taken, one must bear in mind that God recognizes human frailty, and gives us the opportunity of second chances: the opportunity to do teshuva. After referencing this, the language of Moshe's chizzuk centers around how one should be personally affected by the mitzvot: loving them and recognizing their benefit – in order for the mitzvot to always be there for her or him to turn back to when they have done wrong.

Dvar Torah: World Mizrachi

Every Jew is an Ambassador
Rav Doron Perez

Every Jew is an ambassador for Israel, and every Jewish center, beit midrash and shul is an embassy – a spiritual embassy who part of its aim is to represent the State of Israel, defend the State of Israel and develop a deep connection to Eretz Yisrael.

This idea is explicit in this week's Parasha in the Kli Yakar in an ingenious interpretation of a pasuk and a Gemara on this week's Parasha.

It comes from the second paragraph of the Shema which appears in Eikev. It says that the reward of keeping the Torah is that you will have long life and longevity on the land. Famously, the Gemara says that the promise of long life is only in the Land of Israel. Rabbi Yochanan asks can there be elderly people in Bavel? Doesn't the verse explicitly say that it's only in the Land of Israel where there is the promise of long life? How did communities have longevity among Jews around the world?

It says since people spend a lot of time in shul and are connected to holiness they have a long life. But the Kli Yakar asks: the verse explicitly says there's only long life in the land. What does it help if people are going to shul? How is going to shul connected to the promise of long life in the land?

Brilliantly, he says you see from here that the precincts of the shul and the community in the Diaspora is like you are going into the Land of Israel. He brings a proof – it says in the Gemara that in the future all shuls and batei midrash will be transported to the Land of Israel. Why are shuls, community centers and batei midrash transported to the Land of Israel? Because, he says, they are admat Eretz Yisrael.

That's the concept of an embassy in international law – if you go into the Israeli embassy in any country in the world, locally you are on the local land, but legally you are in extraterritorial land of the host country.

That is how an embassy operates diplomatically and politically, and brilliantly, the Kli Yakar says, that is the purpose of a Jewish community, a shul and beit midrash in chutz la'aretz.

One of the greatest acts of discrimination is to constantly discriminate against the State of Israel, that only the Jewish people should not have a sovereign independent nation-state. Every other country and religion can. It's just the Jews which can't. And many are aiming to

divorce between Jewish identity and a connection to a shul and Torah, and our connection to Eretz Yisrael. But you cannot sever between the two.

We need to all ensure that our shuls and community centers are deeply connected to Israel – that there is support for Israel, a love of Israel, and a deep connection to Israel.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Daniel Stein

Developing Dveikus

The mitzvah of dveikus, to cling to Hashem, appears five times in the Torah, all in Sefer Devarim. It is mentioned once in Parshas Va'eschanan, "But you who cleave to Hashem your God are alive, all of you, this day" (Devarim 4:4), and twice in Parshas Eikev, "You shall fear Hashem, your God, worship Him, and cleave to Him and swear by His Name" (Devarim 10:20), "For if you keep all these commandments which I command you to do them, to love the Lord, your God, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave to Him" (Devarim 11:22). It is then revisited in Parshas Re'eh, "You shall follow Hashem, your God, fear Him, keep His commandments, heed His voice, worship Him, and cleave to Him" (Devarim 13:5), and again in Parshas Nitzavim, "To love Hashem your God, to listen to His voice, and to cleave to Him" (Devarim 30:5).

From its repeated emphasis it seems that dveikus represents one of the central concepts and critical foundations of Judaism. If so, why does it only surface in the final book of the Torah and not at some earlier point? Moreover, the notion of dveikus is at times associated "fear of Hashem" and at other times with "love of Hashem," How can the same mitzvah encompass two complementary but at times contradictory impulses? Perhaps this indicates that authentic dveikus is unattainable in the initial stages of avodas Hashem, and is not limited to one theme or mitzvah in particular. Rather real dveikus is a mindset and awareness that emerges only after serving Hashem in all facets of life and at all times, and is therefore all-encompassing and materializes towards the end of the Torah, as the Ibn Ezra (Devarim 11:22) hints, "and cleave to him - in the end, and this is a great secret."

This is apparent from the Gemara (Kesubos 111b) which asserts, "is it possible to cleave to the Divine Presence? Isn't it written 'for Hashem your God is a devouring fire' (Devarim 4:24), rather, this verse teaches that anyone who marries his daughter to a Torah scholar … is considered as if he is cleaving to the Divine Presence." Similarly, the Gemara (Sotah 14a) states, "What is the meaning of that which is written: 'You shall follow Hashem (… and cleave to Him),' but is it actually possible for a person to follow the Divine Presence? Hasn't it already been stated: 'For Hashem your God is a devouring fire', rather the meaning is that one should follow the attributes of Hashem. Just as He clothes the naked … so too, should you clothe the naked. Just as He visits the sick ,.. so too, should you visit the sick."

According to Chazal, dveikus is manifested and expressed by imitating the ways of Hashem and by associating with accomplished Torah scholars. On the other hand, the Ramban (Devarim 11:22) depicts dveikus more literally when he writes, "that the term cleaving includes the obligation that you remember Hashem and His love always, that your thoughts should never be separated from Him ... to such a degree that during conversation with people ... your entire heart will not be with them, but instead will be directed towards Hashem." According to this formulation, dveikus is a contemplative state of dual consciousness, which requires dealing with human beings while simultaneously communing with Hashem and concentrating on the Divine. Why did Chazal avoid this obvious definition of dveikus and how could the Ramban abandon the guidance of Chazal?

We must distinguish between the activity of dveikus and the result. The goal of dveikus is certainly to arrive at a comprehensive and constant awareness of Hashem, where every thought and encounter is informed and suffused by the palpable presence of Hashem. Nonetheless, attempting to achieve this mindset directly through unguided and ungrounded meditative contemplation is presumptuous and elusive, as Chazal already wondered "is it possible to cleave to the Divine Presence?" How does one cultivate a relationship with an ineffable and transcendent Creator? This dilemma presumably prompted Chazal to channel and translate the raw quest for dveikus into an integrated approach that combines imitating and internalizing the revealed will and attributes of Hashem with clinging to appropriate role models who have already attained higher levels of dveikus themselves.[1]

In its pristine form, dveikus must be constant and complete, as the Mahral (Nesivos Olam, Nesiv Ha'avodah ch. 4) writes, "and if the dveikus is only occasional it is not considered dveikus at all." Therefore, full blown dveikus was traditionally viewed as the pinnacle of spiritual achievement, bordering on the prophetic (see Moreh Nevuchim III, 51). Indeed, throughout Kabbalistic literature dveikus is frequently mentioned as the loftiest ideal of the mystical life. For this reason, while dveikus was always pursued and practiced in the form of kavanah (intent) when performing mitzvos, it was not treated as a discreet objective or addressed by any specific independent activity, rather it was regarded as the natural culmination of a life of total religious commitment, and the likely consequence of sincere mitzvah performance animated by a robust affiliation to talmidei chachamim.

However, Gershom Scholem argues that one of the most central elements of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings relates to the doctrine of dveikus, not only in terms of its meaning, but to its position and placement in the order of avodas Hashem. Scholem writes that in the thought of the Baal Shem Tov, "Dveikus is no longer an extreme ideal, to be realized by some rare and sublime spirits at the end of the path. It is no longer the last rung in the ladder of ascent, as in Kabbalism, but the first. Everything begins with man's decision to cleave to God. Dveikus is a starting point and not the end. Everyone is able to realize it instantaneously. All he has to do is take his faith seriously. It is, therefore, small wonder that the Baal Shem identifies faith (emunah) with dveikus ... God pervades everything … to be aware of this real omniprescence and immanence of God is already the realization of a state of dveikus."[2]

Democratizing dveikus, and identifying it primarily with emunah, is compelling, because it serves to provide every Jew, at every level, with an opportunity to fulfill this universal mitzvah and attain some measure of dveikus. This argument led the Mesech Chochmah (Parshas Eikev) and the Nesivos Shalom (Parshas Eikev) to conclude that just like faith and trust are not binary all-or-nothing propositions so too dveikus must possesses multiple degrees and tiers in order to accommodate everyone. The most intense modes of dveikus can still be an extreme and remote state of dual consciousness reserved for the spiritual elite, while at the same time, its more rudimentary forms, consisting of basic faith and trust in Hashem's presence and providence, can rightly be considered the focal point in the religious life of every Jew.

This approach also sees the mitzvos as an instrument for dveikus, and defines dveikus as the contemplative act (yichudim) by which man fixates his thoughts and mind on Hashem and binds himself to the core spiritual element (penimius) inherent in the Torah and mitzvos, instead of relating to the external aspects of the mitzvah exclusively.[3] The central thesis, that the root of every mitzvah is dveikus, was novel and could not have been held by the Kabbalists as long as they placed dveikus at the end of the path of avodas Hashem, following the performance of the essential mitzvah itself. In this context, where the focus of mitzvos is dveikus, and dveikus is defined as actualized emunah whose bottom rungs are easily accessible, the notion of pursuing the contemplative state of dveikus in the abstract becomes a realistic possibility.

Here we need to be mindful of the potential pitfalls involved with an independent pursuit of dveikus outside of the realm of formal Torah and mitzvos. The efficacy and track record of spontaneous dveikisdeke ruach in promoting sustained and substantive religious growth is long and undeniable, and these kinds of events should be encouraged and promoted.

However, we must be careful not to confuse the experiences of kosher entertainment with genuine methods for achieving dveikus. It is true that kosher media and entertainment occupies an important space and provides an essential service, but it is critical that it be classified and catalogued accurately so that we can allocate and direct our religious energy and spiritual passion properly. Similarly, slogans and hashtags of emunah and bittachon might be helpful cues on the road towards actual dveikus, but they should never be mistaken as a substitute for the spiritual work needed to acquire the real thing.

It is instructive to reflect upon the words of Rabbi Dr. Menachem M. Brayer, the late father of the Boyaner Rebbe shlit"a, who wrote in 1968 about the possibility of using narcotics and hallucinogens to trigger authentic dveikus: "Religious experience in its true sense is from within. It is the fervor of the soul - the divine spark - to unite itself with the eternal flame. Such mystic fervor which one sees in the Hasidic ecstasy aroused by tefilah … can hardly be compared to a drug experience. One the one hand, the experience is the climax of hirhur teshuva and cheshbon hanefesh. In the latter case, it is the experience of a person lacking discipline. In the former, it is the result of a total orientation of the self toward accepting a certain mode of life. In the hippie, it is the result of a haphazard attempt to escape the reality of a purposeless existence … Mystical experience is no doubt a part of Judaism, and it may be the summum bonum of religious experience, but it must arise from the involvement of man in the real world, and it must enable him to return to it. It is the final rung in the ladder whose legs are resting on the ground. One doesn't fly to the top, one climbs."[4]

[1] For Rav Soloveitchik's approach to dveikus see, Rabbi Soloveitchik, And from There You Shall Seek, Toras Horav Foundation, 2008, as well as Rabbi Shalom Carmy, On Cleaving as Identification: R. Soloveitchik's Account of Devekut In U-vikashtem Mi-sham, Tradition 41:2, 2008.

[2] Gershom Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism: Devekut, Or Communion with God, Schocken Books, 1971, page 208.

[3] The illegitimacy of compromising the external performance of a mitzvah in order to maximize dveikus, as well as the unique role of Talmud Torah as a vehicle for dveikus, is discussed at length by Rav Chaim Volozhiner in his Nefesh Hachaim. Rav Chaim clearly has a different view on the innate cosmic character of mitzvos and their relationship with dveikus.

[4] Rabbi Menachem M. Brayer, LSD: A Jewish View, Tradition 10:1, 1968.

***[Note to Readers:** The events about to be described took place 93 years ago on Shabbat, Parashat Ekev, 5689 [1929] – I hope that readers of Likutei Torah will permit me once again to share excerpts of this letter written by my great-grandfather, as it is relevant to our people's history on this Shabbat*
- Saadia Reuven Greenberg, Compiler
***------Additional information including extensive historical notes developed by my late father, Meyer Greenberg, z"l, and a facsimile of the original Yiddish letter may be found on my web site:* www.hebron1929.info/**

MEGILLAT HEBRON (excerpts)

With the help of God, Monday, Torah portion Shoftim V'shotrim, 5689 [September 2, 1929], Tel Aviv, may it be built up and firmly established, speedily in our days, Amen. My dear children, may you live and be well. Even before I begin writing, my hand is already shaking, my head swims, and every limb is trembling. I am unable to get control of myself, because the cries are still ringing in my ears. It is one week today since we came back from the bitter tragedy… Although it seems that I am writing this letter with ink, you should know that it is not ink, but tears.

Now, let me get to the point. I don't really know where to start and where to finish, because my blood is still churning inside me. But I will begin my *Megillah* of Hebron. Children, as you already know from my earlier letter, Mama, may she live and be well, had been feeling very weak…she couldn't bear the terribly hot weather… So we left Tel Aviv and went to the country--to Hebron.

…From the very beginning, things did not go well.…On Friday, the 23rd, we heard that things had gotten worse in Jerusalem… Friday afternoon the situation worsened. We heard that on the street Arabs had already beaten several Jews with clubs. Next we heard that all the Jewish stores had closed. The atmosphere was explosive. Everybody was afraid to go out into the street, and we locked ourselves in our rooms. Things looked really bad. What should we do? "No one could go out, and no one could come in "[Joshua 6.1]; everybody was fearful. By now the local Jews too were saying that the situation was serious.

Suddenly, just one hour before candle lighting, pandemonium broke loose. Window panes were smashed on all sides. In our building, they broke every window and began throwing large stones inside. We hid ourselves. They were breaking windows in all the Jewish homes. Now we were in deathly fear. As we were blessing the Shabbes candles, we heard that in the Yeshiva one young man had been killed. It was bitter, the beginning of a slaughter. ... On Shabbes morning, we saw that the situation was getting worse. Cars kept racing back and forth through the streets. They were filled with Arabs armed with long iron bars, long knives, and axes. The Arabs kept screaming that they were going to Jerusalem to slaughter all the Jews. Soon many Jews gathered in our house. We held a meeting and talked over the situation, but couldn't think of anything we could do to protect ourselves, since none of us had any weapons. Many of the people remained in our house, because by then it was too dangerous to try to go home.

Now let me tell you about the massacre. Right after eight o'clock in the morning we heard screams. Arabs had begun breaking into Jewish homes. The screams pierced the heart of the heavens. We didn't know what to do. Our house had two floors. We were downstairs and a doctor lived on the second floor. We figured that we would be safe in the doctor's apartment, but how could we get up there? The stairs were on the outside of the building, but it wasn't safe to go out. So we chopped through the ceiling and that way we climbed up to the doctor's house. Well, after being there only a little while, we realized that we were still in danger because by that time the Arabs had almost reached our house. They were going from door to door, slaughtering everyone who was inside. The screams and the moans were terrible. People were crying Help! Help! But what could we do? There were thirty-three of us. Soon, soon, all of us would be lost.

Just then, God, blessed be He, in His great mercy, sent us an Arab who lived in back of our house. He insisted that we come down from the doctor's apartment and enter his house through the back door. He took us to his cellar, a large room without windows to the outside. We all went in, while he, together with several Arab women, stood outside near the door. As we lay there on the floor, we heard the screams as Arabs were slaughtering Jews. It was unbearable. As for us, we felt that the danger was so great that we had no chance of coming out alive. Each one of us said his vidui [his confession in anticipation of death]. At any moment we could be slaughtered, for double-edged swords were already at our throats. We had not even the slightest hope of remaining alive. We just begged that it should already be done and over.

Five times the Arabs stormed our house with axes, and all the while those wild murderers kept screaming at the Arabs who were standing guard to hand over the Jews. They, in turn, shouted back that they had not hidden any Jews and knew nothing. They begged the attackers not to destroy their homes... We heard everything. In addition, the little children in our group kept crying. We were in deadly fear that the murderers outside would hear them.

As for me, I was already 99 percent in the next world. All the time that we were in the Arab's house, I lay there on the floor in terrible pain [from a heart attack]. It just happened that there were two doctors in the house. They sat near me and they saved my life… Well, I cannot continue describing the destruction any longer. It took several hours--to us it seemed like years--until all became quiet outside. We still lay there, waiting for the Angel of Death to finish with us as quickly as possible.

But God heard our prayers. Suddenly, the door opened, and the police walked in. They had been told that we were hidden there. They demanded that we go along with them, and they would take us to a safe place… When we reached the police station, there was acted out a real-life dance of the devils, for the police had brought together those who were still alive, the surviving remnant. During the earlier confusion, naturally, no one could have known what was happening to anyone else, but there in the police station, everyone first discovered whom he had lost. As people told each other about their misfortunes and how many casualties they had suffered, there burst out a terrible cry, everyone shrieking and crying at the same time. It was unbearable. Blessed God, give us strength! It was beyond human endurance. Three women went out of their minds right there. It is very tragic, but everything is from God.

Now I will tell you the total number of people who were slaughtered in Hebron. As of today, there are 63 holy martyrs... Of the wounded, 49 are in serious condition, and 17 slightly wounded. Who knows how many more fatalities there will be? The Yeshiva suffered 23 killed and 17 wounded. Eight of the dead and 14 of the wounded from the Yeshiva are American boys. Gevald! Twenty-three living Torah scrolls were burned! May the heavens open and avenge us. All the houses of study with their Torah scrolls and holy books were burned; everything in them was destroyed. All the homes were plundered; not even a straw was left!...

…Just one thing, my dear children, may you live and be well, I ask of you that you put away this letter for the generations. Each year, at an agreed-upon day, you should all meet and give thanks and praise to God, blessed be He, who saved your parents from this great catastrophe, and each one of you should make a generous contribution to charity. The miracle took place on Shabbes, Torah portion Ekev, the 18th day of the month of Av, 5689 [August 24, 1929], in Hebron.

Your father, who wishes you the best, writing to you through tears.
Aharon [Aharon Reuven Bernzweig]

The Hebron Massacre of 1929:
A Recently Revealed Letter of a Survivor

by Meyer Greenberg

The massacre of the Jews of Hebron in 1929 put an end to the ancient Jewish community at the burial site of the patriarchs. The riots which erupted throughout the country were an organized Arab attack against the entire Zionist enterprise with the aim of preventing the eventual establishment of a Jewish state. They were the most violent eruption until that time in the conflict that has been termed “one long war between Arabs and Jews comparable to the Hundred Years War in medieval Europe.”[1]

Unlike other parts of the country, where Jews resisted with force, the Hebron community reflected the mind set of the pre modern Jew, conditioned by almost 2,000 years of Jewish powerlessness. The reaction of the local leadership to the impending attack was to turn to the authorities -- the British appointed governor and the Arab notables -- for protection, which, when it arrived, was much too late.

The events in Hebron and my grandparents' miraculous rescue are vividly described in a letter written by my grandfather nine days later to my mother, Blanche Greenberg.

In 1907, the peak year of Jewish immigration into the United States, my maternal grandfather, Aharon Reuven Bernzweig, his wife Breine Zuch Bernzweig, and their six children left Stanislaw, Galicia (then Austrian Poland), and settled in New York City. Twenty years later, in 1927, after their children were grown and they had accumulated a modest capital, they were in a position to fulfill the dream of many traditional Jews to spend their retirement years in Eretz Hakodesh, the Holy Land.

Late in the spring of 1929, my grandparents travelled to the United States in order to attend my brother's bar mitzvah. Upon their return they decided to escape the heat of a Tel Aviv summer by vacationing in Hebron. Five days later the riots broke out.

Zeide Bernzweig's health was affected by the Hebron ordeal, and he died of a heart attack in 1936. Baba Breine continued to live at 16 Bialik Street in Tel Aviv until her death in 1945. That is where I would visit and spend Shabbat in 1937 38, when I studied at Hebrew University.

Aharon and Breine Bernzweig were buried on the Mount of Olives. In the summer of 1967, after the reunification of Jerusalem, my wife and I found and restored their desecrated graves.

While members of the family knew that Zeide had written a letter about Hebron, we were not familiar with the actual text. I found the original in my parents' papers after their death. The Yiddish is closely written on ten pages and is difficult to read. I am therefore greatly indebted to Helen G. Meyrowitz, who deciphered the text and prepared the initial translation, which I have revised and edited.

While preparing the letter for publication, I found clarifying and corroborating information in the testimonies of other eyewitnesses, preserved in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. From the survivor documents I was able to identify others who were in the group of 33 who shared the same hiding place, as well as the names of the Arabs who saved their lives.

MEGILLAT HEBRON

With the help of God, Monday, Torah portion Shoftim V'shotrim, 5689 [September 2, 1929], Tel Aviv, may it be built up and firmly established, speedily in our days, Amen.

My dear children, may you live and be well.

Even before I begin writing, my hand is already shaking, my head swims, and every limb is trembling. I am unable to get control of myself, because the cries are still ringing in my ears. It is one week today since we came back from the bitter tragedy. Each day I want to write to you, but when I sit down to write, all my limbs start to quiver and tears pour from my eyes, so I have to stop. Today for the first time I was able to pull myself together, with all my strength, with superhuman effort. I got up at dawn and sat down to write. I hadn't started yet, but even before I could begin, my pen was already soaked with tears. Although it seems that I am writing this letter with ink, you should know that it is not ink, but

tears.

Now, let me get to the point. I don't really know where to start and where to finish, because my blood is still churning inside me. But I will begin my Megillah of Hebron. Children, as you already know from my earlier letter, Mama, may she live and be well, had been feeling very weak, ever since we came back from our trip to America. Moving to a new apartment and all the hard work involved added to it. The apartment wasn't finished and there was endless aggravation because the work was not being done to her liking. On top of everything else, she couldn't bear the terribly hot weather. It was awful; the perspiring was beyond human endurance. She lay in bed all day because she was too weak to walk about. I kept begging Mama, may she live and be well, with tears in my eyes, that we needed a change of climate. It was impossible to convince her because she didn't want to abandon the house and leave it hefker. Finally she realized that she had no choice and she agreed. She did not want to go by herself, only with me. So we left home and went to the country to Hebron.[2]

We arrived on Sunday, August 18th. There we went to a guest house, where we got a very nice room and came to an agreement on the charges. We paid for one month in advance, since we planned to stay for several months, until after all the holidays, when it would be cooler.[3]

From the very beginning, things did not go well. Although the air was very good and the weather cool, and Mama, may she be well, did not perspire any more, she caught a severe cold and had to stay in bed. In addition, there were swarms of biting mosquitoes. We had no choice but to hope that things would get better. Unfortunately, things don't always turn out the way we would like, and no one knows what the future holds.

Ever since we arrived in Hebron, we had heard talk of disturbances in Jerusalem, that Arabs and Jews were fighting. We didn't have any specific details, but there were rumors in the air, so we were not in a happy state of mind. But what could we do about it?

On Friday, the 23rd, we heard that things had gotten worse in Jerusalem. Everyone became very uneasy and walked about without a head. We had forebodings that something terrible was about to happen but what, exactly, we did not know. I was fearful and kept questioning the local people, who had lived there for generations. They assured me that in Hebron there could never be a pogrom, because as many times as there had been trouble elsewhere in Eretz Israel, Hebron had remained quiet. The local population had always lived very peacefully with the Arabs.

But my heart told me that the situation was serious. Hebron alone, without the surrounding villages, has a population of 24,000. Including the villages, there are 60,000 people. Of what significance is the Jewish community there, a mere 100 families?[4] What could we do to protect ourselves? We could only comfort ourselves with the hope that God, blessed be He, would have mercy, and the troubles would run their course quietly.

Friday afternoon the situation worsened. We heard that on the street Arabs had already beaten several Jews with clubs. Next we heard that all the Jewish stores had closed. The atmosphere was explosive. Everybody was afraid to go out into the street, and we locked ourselves in our rooms. Things looked really bad. What should we do? "No one could go out, and no one could come in "[Joshua 6.1]; everybody was fearful. By now the local Jews too were saying that the situation was serious.

Suddenly, just one hour before candle lighting, pandemonium broke loose. Window panes were smashed on all sides. In our building, they broke every window and began throwing large stones inside. We hid ourselves. They were breaking windows in all the Jewish homes. Now we were in deathly fear. As we were blessing the Shabbes candles, we heard that in the Yeshiva one young man had been killed. It was bitter, the beginning of a slaughter.

In the meantime, mounted policemen arrived, and all became still outside. We thought that our salvation had come. All through the night the police patrolled the streets. But it seemed that they were having problems. You can understand that I walked the floor all the night terribly worried, with my heart in my mouth. On Shabbes morning, we saw that the situation was getting worse. Cars kept racing back and forth through the streets. They were filled with Arabs armed with long iron bars, long knives, and axes. The Arabs kept screaming that they were going to Jerusalem to slaughter all the Jews. Soon many Jews gathered in our house. We held a meeting and talked over the situation, but couldn't think of anything we could do to protect ourselves, since none of us had any weapons. Many of the people remained in our house, because by then it was too dangerous to try to go home.

Now let me tell you about the massacre. Right after eight o'clock in the morning we heard screams. Arabs had begun breaking into Jewish homes. The screams pierced the heart of the heavens. We didn't know what to do. Our house

had two floors. We were downstairs and a doctor lived on the second floor.[5] We figured that we would be safe in the doctor's apartment, but how could we get up there? The stairs were on the outside of the building, but it wasn't safe to go out. So we chopped through the ceiling and that way we climbed up to the doctor's house. Well, after being there only a little while, we realized that we were still in danger because by that time the Arabs had almost reached our house. They were going from door to door, slaughtering everyone who was inside. The screams and the moans were terrible. People were crying Help! Help! But what could we do? There were thirty three of us. Soon, soon, all of us would be lost.[6]

Just then, God, blessed be He, in His great mercy, sent us an Arab who lived in back of our house. He insisted that we come down from the doctor's apartment and enter his house through the back door. He took us to his cellar, a large room without windows to the outside. We all went in, while he, together with several Arab women, stood outside near the door.[7] As we lay there on the floor, we heard the screams as Arabs were slaughtering Jews. It was unbearable. As for us, we felt that the danger was so great that we had no chance of coming out alive. Each one of us said his vidui [his confession in anticipation of death]. At any moment we could be slaughtered, for double edged swords were already at out throats. We had not even the slightest hope of remaining alive. We just begged that it should already be done and over.

Five times the Arabs stormed our house with axes, and all the while those wild murderers kept screaming at the Arabs who were standing guard to hand over the Jews. They, in turn, shouted back that they had not hidden any Jews and knew nothing. They begged the attackers not to destroy their homes.

We heard everything. In addition, the little children in our group kept crying. We were in deadly fear that the murderers outside would hear them.[8]

As for me, I was already 99 percent in the next world. All the time that we were in the Arab's house, I lay there on the floor in terrible pain [from a heart attack].[9] It just happened that there were two doctors in the house. They sat near me and they saved my life.[10]

Well, I cannot continue describing the destruction any longer. It took several hours to us it seemed like years until all became quiet outside. We still lay there, waiting for the Angel of Death to finish with us as quickly as possible.

But God heard our prayers. Suddenly, the door opened, and the police walked in. They had been told that we were hidden there. They demanded that we go along with them, and they would take us to a safe place. We were afraid to go, because we thought they themselves might slaughter us. Eventually, they succeeded in convincing us that they had our good in mind. Since we couldn't walk there, they brought automobiles and took us, under police guard, to the police station, which was in a safe location.[11]

When we reached the police station, there was acted out a real life dance of the devils, for the police had brought together those who were still alive, the surviving remnant. During the earlier confusion, naturally, no one could have known what was happening to anyone else, but there in the police station, everyone first discovered whom he had lost. As people told each other about their misfortunes and how many casualties they had suffered, there burst out a terrible cry, everyone shrieking and crying at the same time. It was unbearable. Blessed God, give us strength! It was beyond human endurance. Three women went out of their minds right there.

In short, we were in the police station three days and three nights. We couldn't eat and we couldn't sleep. We lay on the ground in filth, just listening to the crying and the groaning.[12] Finally, God, blessed be He, had mercy on us and [on Monday night] the police again transferred us to Jerusalem. There we stayed in the Nathan Straus Health Center for two days and two nights, and on Wednesday we came back to Tel Aviv.[13]

I am writing you only about our troubles. I don't have the strength to write about the additional troubles of the whole Jewish community. That you will surely read in the American newspapers. It is very tragic, but everything is from God.

Now I will tell you the total number of people who were slaughtered in Hebron. As of today, there are 63 holy martyrs. While we were still there, 58 were buried in a common grave, 51 males and 7 females; up to today, there are 5 more martyrs from among the wounded. Of the wounded, 49 are in serious condition, and 17 slightly wounded. Who knows how many more fatalities there will be? The Yeshiva suffered 23 killed and 17 wounded. Eight of the dead and 14 of the wounded from the Yeshiva are American boys. Gevald! Twenty three living Torah scrolls were burned! May the heavens open and avenge us.

All the houses of study with their Torah scrolls and holy books were burned; everything in them was destroyed. All the homes were plundered; not even a straw was left!

We ourselves were left practically naked and barefoot. Since we had planned to stay there a few months, we had taken along all our clothes. Mama, may she live and be well, was left with only the one dress she was wearing and I, too, had only what I was wearing. They even took my talis and tefilin. Before Shabbes, I gave the money that I had brought along to the innkeeper for safekeeping. The Arabs took that money too, quite a large amount.

To make matters worse, the situation in the entire country is very bad, and no one is paying his debts. I have notes for several thousand dollars. Last week, notes for $750 came due, but no one paid. Who knows what will happen in the future? God forbid that we shouldn't be ruined altogether.[14] We're trying to keep our heads above water while we keep hearing that here things are bad and there things are bad. May God, blessed be He, have mercy and help all the Jews, including us, that we should at least be well and be able to bear up under these trials. We Jews have had enough troubles!

I have no patience to write about family matters because my hand is still trembling.

Just one thing, my dear children, may you live and be well, I ask of you that you put away this letter for the generations. Each year, at an agreed upon day, you should all meet and give thanks and praise to God, blessed be He, who saved your parents from this great catastrophe, and each one of you should make a generous contribution to charity. The miracle took place on Shabbes, Torah portion Ekev, the 18th day of the month of Av, 5689 [August 24, 1929], in Hebron.

Your father, who wishes you the best, writing to you through tears.

Aharon [Aharon Reuven Bernzweig]
[(Wife) Breine Zuch Bernzweig]

APPENDIX 1: STATISTICAL SUMMARY

Total number of Jewish residents in Hebron: 750 800

Jews present in Hebron at the time (including visitors): 550 estimated

Residents not present: 250 300

Yeshiva students and staff away between terms

People visiting or working elsewhere

Killed in the riots: 67

Yeshiva students and staff: 24

Buried in mass grave: 59

Wounded and survived: 53

Survived and uninjured: (assembled in police station after the riots): 430

Saved by Arabs: 280 300

Saved in other ways: (hiding, homes not reached, lay among bodies of dead and wounded): 130 estimated

Arabs who saved Jews: 25 estimated

Arabs who participated in attacks and plunder: thousands

APPENDIX 2

Hadassah's Dr. Kitayin Testifies:

"At about 11:00 A.M. on Friday, while I was at work [in the Health Clinic], the nurse, Shoshana Bat Haim, was told by one of the frequenters of the dispensary, Rashad Sa'ad, 18 years old and a government official, that preparations were being made to kill Jews in Hebron. The nurse called me and reported the matter. I answered, 'Tell him that these days one doesn't ordinarily murder people.'

At the same time an Arab guide named Bakri came into the dispensary. When the nurse requested two piasters for the medicine, he replied that he would put out her eyes that day. The nurse called me and told me what the Arab had said, and I chased him out of the building. After a few minutes another guide came in and begged me to forgive the man. I forgave him and he came in for the medicine."

After 10:00 on Saturday morning, when the slaugher had ceased, Dr. Kitayin was sought out and taken to the Police Station to tend the wounded. Together with them were others who were not wounded but "whose faces and clothes were full of blood. They told me that they had lain near the dead and had been saved by being thought dead." Shortly afterward the wounded and the corpses were moved to the government Health Office. (Kitayin Statement, op. cit., Annex 72.)

There Dr. Kitayin worked without stop for 36 hours until Sunday evening, when ambulances arrived from Hadassah to transport the wounded to Jerusalem. Assisting Kitayin were the local Jewish medical staff, Dr. Elkanah and the Hadassah nurse. Toward evening on Saturday they were joined by a surgeon, Dr. John MacQueen, the Government Medical Officer from Jerusalem, his assistant and two nurses. Together they operated upon and treated about 20 of the 60 wounded. (Letter from Dr. Kitayin to the Palestine Zionist Executive dated September 25, 1929, in C.Z.A., S25/4601, and Oded Avissar, p. 418.)

Notes:

[1] For the significance of the riots see Naomi W. Cohen, The Year after the Riots: American Responses to the Palestine Crisis of 1929-30, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988; and Aaron S. Klieman, ed. The Rise of Israel -- The Turn toward Violence 1920-1929, New York and London: Garland Publishers, 1987, p. 12.

[2] In those days Hebron in the south and Safed in the north were favorite summer vacation sites for the traditional Jewish community. Hebron, 3,000 feet above sea level, is 19 miles south of Jerusalem.

[3] The guest house was called Eshel Avraham, the Tamarisk Tree of Abraham, a classical Jewish symbol of hospitality. It was operated by Haim Shneerson and was one of five or more small family run lodgings for visitors. Students at the Hebron Yeshiva were housed with private families. See Statment of Yehuda Leib Shneerson, son of Haim Shneerson, Central Zionist Archives (hereinafter C.Z.A.), 1929 Riots, Notes on Hebron, File S25/4601, Annex 16. Eshel Avraham was the first hotel in Hebron and was located in one of five buildings constructed by the two grandfathers of Yehuda Leib Shneerson during the period of Turkish rule over Palestine. Hard times forced them to sell the buildings to Arabs. On the main floor there were four rooms and a synagogue. See Yehuda Leib Shneerson, Hoy Hebron, Hebron! (Hebrew), Tel Aviv, Yair Publishers, 1980, p.23.

[4] The entire Jewish community of Hebron numbered between 750 and 800. Included in these figures are about 200 students and staff of Yeshivat Hebron Kenesset Israel. In 1924, Rabbi Moses Mordecai Epstein had transplanted 150 students and faculty en masse from Slobodka in Lithuania to Hebron. Rabbi Epstein was notable also for his interest in the building up of Palestine. While at the Volozhin Yeshiva in the 1880s he encouraged the Hovevei Zion group organized

by the students, and he himself was a member of the Hovevei Zion delegation which purchased the land for the settlement of Hadera in 1891.

A population figure of 20,000 Moslems and 800 Jews in the town of Hebron is given in the memorandum of the Palestine Zionist Executive, prepared by Mordecai Eliash and dated October 14, 1929, for the government Commission of Enquiry into the 1929 Riots, C.Z.A., S25/4601. The census of 1931, however, lists 17,531 Moslems in the urban area and 50,100 in the rural portion of the Hebron sub district.

[5] In his disposition after the riots he identified himself as Dr. Zwi Kitayin, Hadassah physician at Hebron. C.Z.A., S25/4601, Annex 72. Later he changed the spelling of his name to Kitain.

The Hadassah Clinic was housed in a building erected in 1909 by a Bagdadi Jew, Joseph Avraham Shalom, and the Sasson family for the Hesed Le'Avraham Hospital. Subsequently the structure was takan over by the Hadassah organization and called Beit Hadassah.

The clinic in Hebron is listed in the November 1919 report of the American Zionist Medical Unit (A.Z.M.U.), set up in 1918 by Hadassah and the American Zionist Organization. The A.Z.M.U. maintained hospitals in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Safed and Tiberias, as well as clinics in many towns and settlements. In 1921 the name was changed to Hadassah Medical Organization (H.M.O.). C.Z.A., Hadassah 1920 22, S30/2513.

Dr. Kitayin, in his statement, described the atmosphere of threats and danger on the eve of the riots and his work in caring for the wounded in the days that followed. See Appendix 2.

[6] Only five minutes before the mob reached the guest house, the Arab landlord "knocked and said to us: "Come out of here at once and go to my house. There you'll be safer." Statements of Shneerson and Kitayin, op. cit., Annexes 16 and 72.

The number of people who took refuge with him is verified by Dr. Kitayin. op. cit., S25/4601.

The known members of the group are the family of Haim Shneerson and his son Yehuda Leib, Dr. Zwi Kitayin, his wife Rivka and their two children, Gavriel and Elisheva, Dr. Leib Levit and Aharon Reuven and Breine Bernzweig. About half of the 33 were children.

[7] The name of the Arab was Haj Eissa El Kourdieh, who is included prominently in the three lists of Arabs identified shortly after the massacre as those who saved the lives of Jews. He lived in the same courtyard as the guest house and was its landlord. One of the women was his wife, Imm Mahmoud.

The most reliable of the lists, dated January 20, 1930, was attested to by the rabbis of the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities, Yaacov Yosef Slonim and Meir Franco. It includes 19 rescuers and 270 rescued. Since the list underestimates the number in my grandfather's group by nine, we would estimate the total number of Jews saved by Arabs as 280 to 300. The number of Arab rescuers should also be increased by at least four or six to compensate for the omission of women from the list.

The other lists are unsigned and undated. The shorter of the two, naming 17 Arabs but omitting numbers for Jews, is entitled "Arabs of Hebron who behaved well towards Jews." This is apparently an earlier compilation that is referred to in a letter from Mordecai Eliash to the chairman of the Palestine Zionist Executive, Colonel Frederick H. Kisch, dated November 13, 1929, which states, "I attach a list of Arabs of Hebron who behaved well towards Jews."

The third list, which credits 32 Arabs with saving over 444 Jews, appears exaggerated. Only 430 Jews were alive and whole when assembled to the police station, and that number included a substantial number whose homes were not reached by the attackers, others who hid and were not discovered, and those who were overlooked as they lay among the bodies of the dead and wounded. See C.Z.A., The Riots in Palestine, August 1929, Arabs Who Assisted Jews, S25/3409 and List of Jews Protected by Moslems in Hebron, S25/4472.

[8] Other survivors add details: During the attacks two Arab women sat in front of the door and ground on millstones, whose shrill whine, together with the women's screams, helped to drown out the sounds of the crying children inside. Earlier, Imm Mahmoud handed her 10 year old son to the group as a hostage, to reassure them that she would not give them up. The mother coached the boy. When she would call out to him, "Are there any Jews inside with you?" he was to answer, "No, there are no Jews here. They all ran away."

The people inside heard one of the attackers shout out, "Today is a day that is holy to Mohammed. Anyone who does not kill Jews is a sinner." Dr. Kitayin and Shneerson, op. cit., Annexes 72 and 16. Oral interview wth Mrs. Rivka Kitain Mellor and her daughter, Mrs. Elisheva Greidinger, on August 24, 1989.

Edward Robbin, who went to Hebron three weeks later "with a convoy of refugees returning to their homes to bring the remnants of their possessions to Jerusalem," describes meeting a woman whom we recognize as Imm Mahmoud. "Opposite the Slonim house in front of what had been a hotel, a crowd of Jews had gathered about an Arab woman. To each one that approached they repeated the story of how she had saved twenty three [sic] people by bringing them into her house. People looked at the thin worn face of the Arab woman with awe." The Menorah Journal, XVII, 3 (December 1929), p.304.

[9] I remember hearing at the time that he suffered a heart attack.

[10] The second doctor was Dr. Leib Levit, the government veterinary surgeon in Hebron. Statement of Dr. Levit, C.Z.A., S25/4601, Annex 32.

[11] Eyewitness accounts report that police with rifles controlled the streets on Friday night. On Saturday morning, however, they were sent out armed only with clubs and quickly lost control of the mobs. Only when the police commander R.O. Cafferata himself was attacked did he order the police to be rearmed with rifles. They returned, fired shots into the air and the rioting immediately stopped. Op. cit., S25/4601, Statements of Rabbi Feivel Epstein of the Hebron Yeshiva, Annex 28; Yehoshua Hason, Annex 40; Rabbi Yaacov Yosef Slonim, Annex 6; Kitayin, Annex 72, and Shneerson, Annex 16.

[12] The rescued sat and slept on the floor, soaked with the blood of the wounded who had lain there earlier. For two days the British did not supply them with food. Only on Monday were they able to purchase half burned pitta and grapes. The police made no effort to clean the room until they heard that people were coming from Jerusalem to evacuate the women and children. Oded Avissar, ed., Sefer Hebron (Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1970), p. 419.

The police station was in the Romano House, a spacious building with dozens of rooms that was constructed by a Jew from Istanbul in the 1860's. During World War I the Turkish authorities confiscated the building. When the British took over the country they used the structure as a police station, courthouse and prison.

[13] [On Sunday night] "Crowds gathered at the [Hadassah] Hospital [on Straus Street] and waited for the wounded to be brought from Hebron. The [British] authorities ordered that they be transported in the dead of night when the streets would be empty. The next night the women and children refugees [and the elderly] were transported in buses. They brought them to the new Straus [Health Center] building....(This then would be the opening of the new building)....

As the buses stopped, a muffled hysterical crying, shouting, screaming. Half crazed women leaped from the autos, clutching their children tightly and moaning....

One little old woman had jumped out of the auto and started to run about silently among the crowd searching and whispering, "My children, have you seen my children?" Robbin, op. cit., p. 299.

[14] My grandfrather had invested his capital in mortgages and construction loans, especially in Bnai Brak, which was being developed in those years.

By Bryna & Paul Epstein of Rehovot, Israel, Dvora & Nathan Liebster, and Saadia & Lily Greenberg
in loving memory of Saadia, Bryna,& Dvora's great grandparents, Aharon Reuven and Breine Bernzweig, on the 91st anniversary of their miraculous deliverance, b'Chasdei Hashem, during the Hebron massacre
on Shabbat Parashat Eikev, 18 Menachem Av 5689 (August 24, 1929).

BS"D

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from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> date: Aug 18, 2022, 8:50 PM

Rabbi Sacks on Parsha

The Power of Gratitude

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l

In the early 1990s, one of the great medical research exercises of modern times took place. It became known as the Nun Study. Some seven hundred American nuns, all members of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States, agreed to allow their records to be accessed by a research team investigating the process of ageing and Alzheimer's Disease. At the start of the study the participants were aged between 75 and 102.[1]

What gave this study its unusual longitudinal scope is that sixty years early the very same nuns had been asked by their Mother Superior to write a brief autobiographical account of their life and their reasons for entering the convent. These documents were now analysed by the researchers using a specially devised coding system to register, among other things, positive and negative emotions. By annually assessing the nuns' current state of health, the researchers were able to test whether their emotional state in 1930 had affected their health some sixty years later. Because they had all lived a very similar lifestyle during these six decades, they formed an ideal group for testing hypotheses about the relationship between emotional attitudes and health.

The results, published in 2001, were startling.[2] The more positive emotions – such as contentment, gratitude, happiness, love and hope – the nuns expressed in their autobiographical notes, the more likely they were to be alive and well sixty years later. The difference was as much as seven years in life expectancy. So remarkable was this finding that it has led, since then, to a new field of gratitude research, as well as a deepening understanding of the impact of emotions on physical health.

What medicine now knows about individuals, Moses knew hundreds of years ago about nations. Gratitude – hakarat ha-tov – is at the heart of what he has to say about the Israelites and their future in the Promised Land. Gratitude had not been their strong point in the desert. They complained about lack of food and water, about the manna and the lack of meat and vegetables, about the dangers they faced from the Egyptians as they were leaving and about the inhabitants of the land they were about to enter. They lacked thankfulness during the difficult times. A greater danger still, said Moses, would be a lack of gratitude during the good times. This is what he warned:

When you have eaten and been satisfied, and have built fine houses and lived in them, when your herds and flocks have grown abundant, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have has multiplied, your heart may become proud, forgetting the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery… You might be tempted to say to yourself, 'My power, the strength of my own hand, have brought me this great wealth.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the power to do great things, upholding the covenant that He swore to your ancestors… Deut. 8:12-18

The worst thing that could happen to them, warned Moses, would be that they forgot how they came to the land, how God had promised it to their ancestors, and had taken them from slavery to freedom, sustaining them during the forty years in the wilderness. This was a revolutionary idea: that the nation's history be engraved on people's souls, that it was to be re-enacted in the annual cycle of festivals, and that the nation, as a nation, should never attribute its achievements to itself – "my power and the might of my own hand" – but should always ascribe its victories, indeed its very existence, to something higher than itself: to God. This is a dominant theme of Deuteronomy, and it echoes throughout the book time and again.

Since the publication of the Nun Study and the flurry of further research it inspired, we now know of the multiple effects of developing an attitude of gratitude. It improves physical health and immunity against disease. Grateful people are more likely to take regular exercise and go for regular medical check-ups. Thankfulness reduces toxic emotions such as resentment, frustration and regret and makes depression less likely. It helps people avoid over-reacting to negative experiences by seeking revenge. It even tends to make people sleep better. It enhances self-respect, making it less likely that you will envy others for their achievements or success. Grateful people tend to have better relationships. Saying "thank you" enhances friendships and elicits better performance from employees. It is also a major factor in strengthening resilience. One study of Vietnam War Veterans found that those with higher levels of gratitude suffered lower incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Remembering the many things we have to be thankful for helps us survive painful experiences, from losing a job to bereavement.[3]

Jewish prayer is an ongoing seminar in gratitude. Birkat ha-Shachar, 'the Dawn Blessings' said at the start of morning prayers each day, form a litany of thanksgiving for life itself: for the human body, the physical world, land to stand on and eyes to see with. The first words we say each morning – Modeh Ani, "I thank you" – mean that we begin each day by giving thanks.

Gratitude also lies behind a fascinating feature of the Amidah. When the leader of prayer repeats the Amidah aloud, we are silent other than for the responses of Kedushah, and saying Amen after each blessing, with one exception. When the leader says the words Modim anachnu lach, "We give thanks to You," the congregation says a parallel passage known as Modim de-Rabbanan. For every other blessing of the Amidah, it is sufficient to assent to the words of the leader by saying Amen. The one exception is Modim, "We give thanks." Rabbi Elijah Spira (1660–1712) in his work Eliyahu Rabbah,[4] explains that when it comes to saying thank you, we cannot delegate this away to someone else to do it on our behalf. Thanks must come directly from us.

Part of the essence of gratitude is that it recognises that we are not the sole authors of what is good in our lives. The egoist, says Andre Comte-Sponville, "is ungrateful because he doesn't like to acknowledge his debt to others and gratitude is this acknowledgement."[5] La Rochefoucald put it

more bluntly: “Pride refuses to owe, self-love to pay.”[6] Thankfulness has an inner connection with humility. It recognises that what we are and what we have is due to others, and above all to God. Comte-Sponville adds: “Those who are incapable of gratitude live in vain; they can never be satisfied, fulfilled or happy: they do not live, they get ready to live, as Seneca puts it.”[7]

Though you don’t have to be religious to be grateful, there is something about belief in God as creator of the universe, shaper of history and author of the laws of life that directs and facilitates our gratitude. It is hard to feel grateful to a universe that came into existence for no reason and is blind to us and our fate. It is precisely our faith in a personal God that gives force and focus to our thanks.

It is no coincidence that the United States, founded by Puritans – Calvinists steeped in the Hebrew Bible – should have a day known as Thanksgiving, recognising the presence of God in American history. On 3rd October 1863, at the height of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln issued a Thanksgiving proclamation, thanking God that though the nation was at war with itself, there were still blessings for which both sides could express gratitude: a fruitful harvest, no foreign invasion, and so on. He continued:

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy… I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States… to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

What might such a declaration made today – in Israel, or the United States, or indeed anywhere – do to heal the wounds that so divide nations today? Thanksgiving is as important to societies as it is to individuals. It protects us from resentments and the arrogance of power. It reminds us of how dependent we are on others and on a Force greater than ourselves. As with individuals so with nations: thanksgiving is essential to happiness and health.

[1] See Robert Emmons, Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007. [2] Deborah D. Danner, David A. Snowdon, and Wallace V. Friesen, “Positive Emotions in Early Life and Longevity: Findings from the Nun Study”, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 80.5 (2001), pp. 804-13. [3] Much of the material in this paragraph is to be found in articles published in Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life @ http://greatergood.berkeley.edu.

[4] Eliyahu Rabbah, Orach Chayyim 127:1. [5] André Comte-Sponville, A Small Treatise on the Great Virtues: The Uses of Philosophy in Everyday Life, New York: Holt, 2001, p. 133. [6] Ibid., p. 135. [7] Ibid., p. 137.

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from: **Rav Immanuel Bernstein** <ravbernstein@journeysintorah.com>
date: Aug 18, 2022, 6:59 AM subject: Dimensions in Ekev

DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

Ekev

To Go in Hashem’s Ways וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת מִצְוֹת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בִּדְרָכָיו וּלְיִרְאָה אֹתוֹ. You shall observe the commandments of Hashem, your God, to go in His ways and to fear Him.[1] The idea of “going in Hashem’s ways” appears twice more in our parsha. In Chapter 10, it states:[2] וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ שֹׁאֵל מֵעִמָּךְ כִּי אִם לְיִרְאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו וּלְאַהֲבָה אֹתוֹ. And now, Israel, what does Hashem, your God, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your God, to go in all His ways and to love Him. And in Chapter 11, we find:[3] כִּי אִם שָׁמֹר תִּשְׁמְרוּן אֶת כָּל הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת... לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם לָלֶכֶת בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו וּלְדָבְקָה בּוֹ. For if you will observe this entire commandment… to love Hashem, your God, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him. It is interesting to note that in all three of these verses, this concept is presented differently in terms of other Torah ideals: In the first verse, it is mentioned before fear of Hashem. In the second verse, it is mentioned after fear of Hashem and before love of Hashem. In the third verse, it is mentioned after love of Hashem and before cleaving to Him. What are we to make of these shifts? The Chafetz Chaim explains.[4] Fear of Hashem, love of Him, and cleaving to Him are three increasingly higher levels of one’s relationship with Hashem. On the other hand, the idea of “going in His ways” represents emulating Hashem’s attributes of kindness and compassion, things that are generally expressed in one’s relationships with other people. There is a notion that prevails among many whereby development in one’s relationship with Hashem involves disassociating oneself from other people and their needs — things which might serve only as a distraction from one’s spiritual pursuits. Our parsha teaches just the opposite. The three verses that mention emulating Hashem represent a progression, with each time that the concept appears seeing the person at a more developed stage in his relationship with Hashem. By emulating Hashem in his dealings with others, the person attains an affinity with — and a closeness to — the Divine. Hence, initially it can lead him toward fear of Hashem, from there to love of Hashem, and from there the cleaving to Him. This sweeping view of the concept of “going in Hashem’s ways” as it appears in our parsha is a compelling reminder of the synergy that exists between all categories of mitzvos. **From Blessings to Awe** וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ שֹׁאֵל מֵעִמָּךְ כִּי אִם לְיִרְאָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ... And now, Israel, what does Hashem, your God, ask of you, except to fear Hashem, your God...[5] The Talmud sees an allusion in the words of our verse for the idea of reciting one hundred blessings every day, expounding, “Read not ‘מה — what’ but ‘מאה — a hundred.’”[6] What is the connection between these two things? R’ Shlomo Zalman Auerbach explains that the Gemara is addressing the fact that in asking, “What does Hashem ask of you, except to fear Him?” the verse appears to see fear of Hashem as something that is simple and straightforward. As we know, this is often not the case. How, then, are we to understand the verse’s message? In truth, however, the reason people find fear of Hashem difficult is because they are not conscious of Hashem and all He does for them on an ongoing basis. Reciting blessings every day helps instill that consciousness, as it maintains an awareness of Hashem’s control of and benevolence toward the world. When a person has this, fear of Hashem can actually be seen as something that is natural and straightforward. As such, the Gemara informs us that it is through “מאה” that one is able to access the “מה.”[7] [1] Devarim 8:6. [2] Verse 12. [3] Verse 22. [4] Introduction to Ahavas Chessed. [5] Devarim 10:12. [6] Menachos 43b. [7] Heard from Rav Auerbach by my cousin, R’ Elimelech Cooperman, shlita.

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https://torah.org/torah-portion/parsha-insights-5760-eikev-2/

The Reward Will Be In the End

Parshas Eikev

Posted on August 18, 2022 (5782)

By Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we read the parsha of Eikev. “V’ha’yah aikev tishm’une ais hamishpatim… {And it will be ‘eikev’ you will accept the judgments…}.[7:12]” The word ‘eikev’ has many different meanings which the different commentators incorporate into their explanation of the passuk {verse}.

The Targum explains ‘eikev’ to mean ‘in exchange.’ In exchange for your accepting the laws, the passuk continues and says that Hashem will maintain the covenant and kindness of which He swore to the Patriarchs.

Rashi explains the word ‘eikev’ to mean ‘heel.’ If you will accept those ‘light’ mitzvos which a person (often) tramples on with his heel…

Eikev can also mean the end, as the heel is the ‘end’ of the body. The Baal HaTurim often explains the connection between the last words of one parsha and the first words of the following parsha. Here he points out that the previous parsha, after commanding us to keep the commandments, concluded with the words: “Today to do them [7:11].” Our parsha begins: “V’hayah eikev–And it will be in the end.” Today, this world, is the place to fulfill the commandments but the reward will only be in the end, in the world to come.

Last night my wife and I visited an old neighbor of ours who had lost her husband while we were away in the States. I had mentioned them in parsha-insights a while ago but I feel it deserves to be repeated.

They were both survivors of the Holocaust. He had been married with children when the atrocities began. By the end of the war he was alone in a way that I don’t think any of us could even imagine. She was single when she was sent to Auschwitz.

My wife and I learned to be sensitive to her sensitivities. My wife once ‘snapped’ the gum she was chewing while our neighbor was visiting. She jumped and suddenly had a look of terror on her face. She, blushing, explained that the sound reminded her of the whips she had been subjected to. Another young couple in the building once brought home a dog. She took refuge in our apartment which was the closest door available. She explained that ‘Dr.’ Mengele Y”SH had wanted to know what happens when a human is bit by a dog and nothing is done to treat the wound. She was chosen as the ‘patient’ and since then had a tremendous fear of dogs.

They met after the war and married. Wanting to start a more hopeful life than Europe could offer, they were part of the ‘illegal immigration’ to Palestine. When the State was declared, life didn’t become all that much easier for them. She would often laugh, hearing about the aliyah {immigration to Israel} rights that the government granted immigrants and comparing it to what they had been faced with on their ‘aliyah’ about thirty five years earlier. We received rent subsidies on our apartment–they lived in tents. We had three years during which we could buy a car and all major appliances tax-free–they were draining swamps. The list went on and on.

Two children were born to them, a son and a daughter. The son fought in the Six Day War but died as a very young man. I never got clear if he died in the war or from an illness afterwards.

When my wife and I moved to Israel they were already older people. He worked hard in the kitchen of one of the local institutions. She would deliver the mail. Until they became too old and feeble, they were there daily, earning their honest living.

They were people who had borne so much pain and suffering and yet carried on with their lives with happiness and a sincere devotion to Hashem. I often thought that any one of the things which they had endured probably would have knocked me right out of the batter’s box. But they endured.

As we were sitting and talking last night, reminiscing about her husband, a”h, my gaze fell onto the numbers still etched on her arm. I thought to myself that we really don’t have too many people like this left. People who suffered so much only because they were Jews–and yet didn’t budge.

We are accustomed to such comforts and luxuries. One of my Rabbeim once said that when we want to describe to our children how hard it was when we were kids, we’ll have to tell them that when we wanted to change the channel of the television, we had to actually get out of our chair, walk to the television and turn the dial…

I also thought about the Rashi that I quoted above. Rashi spoke about the commandments which get trampled on–I was thinking about the people who get trampled on.

She said to us a number of times that this world doesn’t seem to have any room for her. Money, money, money. That’s all that seems to matter. That is the idolatry of today. That’s all people want–that’s all people respect. Everyone wants it but don’t want to work for it. (And that was her assessment without her ever having heard about IPO’s and internet stocks…)

Her husband of blessed memory worked hard and simply in order to earn his living. He never expected anything from anyone else and never wanted anything from anyone else. Amongst the Sages of the Talmud we find Rabi Yochanan the sandal-maker. That is how he is referred to throughout the Talmud. Productive, honest, proud. My neighbor was a potato peeler–those were the only ‘chips’ he worked with. Productive, honest, proud. Very often, those are the people who get trampled on.

Our parsha warns: “Be careful not to forget Hashem your G-d… You’ll build beautiful houses, have much livestock, amass large amounts of silver and gold… and forget Hashem.[8:11-14]”

Every person is created in the ‘form’ of Hashem. Last night I was thinking that perhaps forgetting the poor, ‘insignificant’ people is included in this warning not to forget Hashem. The truth is that we are the ones who stand to lose the most by not getting to know and learn from such incredibly stalwart people. As I was looking at the numbers on her arm I was thinking that the window of opportunity is slowly closing. May Hashem grant us the wisdom to open our eyes and our hearts.

Good Shabbos,

Yisroel Ciner

This is dedicated in the memory of my neighbor,R’ Binyamin Zev ben R’ Yosef Shaul, z”l. TNZB”H

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from: **TorahWeb** <torahweb@torahweb.org> date: Aug 18, 2022, 11:02 AM subject: Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky - Kabbolas Ol Mitzvos

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky

Kabbolas Ol Mitzvos

In Parshah Eikev, we have the second half - or second third, if you will - of the daily kerias Shema. The last paragraph is really a distinct point, i.e. remembering the redemption from Mitzrayim, but the first two paragraphs have many striking similarities and distinctions. First of all, they seem to us to be somewhat repetitious. The Mishna (Berachos 2:2) explains the content and order of these two paragraphs as follows:

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korcha said: why, in the mitzva of the recitation of Shema, did the portion of Shema precede that of Vehaya im shamoa? This is so that one will first accept upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven, the awareness of G-d and G-d's unity, and only then accept upon himself the yoke of the mitzvot, which appears in the paragraph of Vehaya im shamoa. If the point is to do the mitzvos, and a person is ready to do them, should that not suffice? If a person accepts upon himself the yoke of heaven, does that not automatically mean that he will accept the yoke of mitzvos? After all, aren't they almost synonymous? If a person is willing to do what Hashem commands us to do because he is the ultimate King, then isn't he perforce going to perform the mitzvos?

Additionally, the reward and punishment aspect which is included in this second paragraph is markedly different then the first paragraph. In the first paragraph we speak of total faith and commitment to Hashem even at the price of giving up one's life or possessions. There does not seem to be any indication of reward, and even possibly the contrary: one may end up losing everything because of one's faith in Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Why does this change so drastically in the second paragraph? We also are puzzled by the offering of these rewards and punishments. We know that the Mishna (Avos 1:3) exhorts us to obey Hashem the way a servant would, regardless of reward. There are places where the Torah indicates rewards and punishments, but those are seen primarily as indicators of when we are performing well as opposed to when we are straying. They are a type of positive and negative reinforcement; they are symptoms and signs, but not the purpose. In this paragraph, where we express our core commitment to observing mitzvos , why is the aspect of reward and punishment included?

Let us understand the distinction between these two commitments. The difference between the "yoke of heaven" versus the "yoke of mitzvos" is as follows: The yoke of heaven implies that Hashem's will is the dominant will in the universe, and a command of His must be accepted as such. It means

that we don't need to feel or think that the mitzvos are in any way of use, help, or benefit in any way to anyone, neither physically nor even spiritually. The yoke of heaven simply implies that His orders ought to be obeyed as such, period.

But the yoke of mitzvos is a very different type of obligation. True, if one does not accept the yoke of heaven then one really cannot accept the yoke of mitzvos. We need to realize, however, that just as the mitzvos are obligatory because Hashem gave them to us, it is equally true that they also are there to perfect the world. Hashem put us in this world with a mandate, and that mandate is "lovdo olshamra" - to work the garden and to guard against harm. Adam was put into this world in order to develop the world. Hashem has chosen to make us the ones who either bring out the best in the world, or destroy it. The reward and punishment mentioned in this parshah are not merely a feedback mechanism or a reinforcement to spur us to do what's right, rather they are our core understanding of what we're accomplishing. We are the messenger of the Divine to accomplish this.

This is most strongly expressed by Rabbeinu Bchaya (Devarim 27, 26): "Cursed be he who will not uphold the words of this Torah." This includes all the commandments in the Torah. The meaning of the verse is: a person must acknowledge all the commandments of the Torah as true and emanating from God; he may not exclude a single one of them from his acceptance as such by denying that it is of value to body and soul. He must not view a single commandment as superfluous and meaningless. This is the meaning of אשר לא יקים לעשות אותם. He must be convinced in his heart that all the commandments are worthwhile observing seeing they are all full of meaning to people engaged in studying them. Thus, our reading of kerias Shema twice a day affirms the following two core aspects of our belief. One is that the world of mitzvos is mandated by Hashem. We do not have the discretion to choose our own mitzvos or deny them. We are obligated to do them whether we understand their meaning or not. The second core belief, expressed in the second part of kerias Shema, is that all of those mitzvos that are mandated by Hashem, and done as such, are activities that bring out the good in the world. They are not whims, chas veshalom, nor are they meaningless commandments; rather they are the core of what nourishes the world. And we must believe that when we do what is good and right, the world blossoms, while refraining from doing so, or do things that are bad or evil, destroys the world. This is complete emuna: both ohl malchus shamaim and ol mitzvos.

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from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** / The Destiny Foundation <info@jewishdestiny.com> date: Aug 18, 2022

EKEV 5782

Moshe's discourse to the children of Israel at the end of his life continues in this week's parsha. I think that it has to be said that Moshe presents a "fair and balanced" review of the events that have befallen Israel during its desert sojourn. The good and the bad, the exalted and the petty are all recorded for us in his words. And his view of the future of his beloved people is also a balanced mixture of woeful warnings and of great reward, of unlimited opportunity and of crushing defeats. As always, he is forced to leave the choice of behavior and direction to the people of Israel themselves but he attempts surely to guide their choices in the right direction through his words and predictions. This is perhaps the greatest quality of a leader – the ability to clearly outline significant choices in life and society and give guidance to one's people to make wise and beneficial decisions. Leaders who portray only one side of the coin, the bright one– who promise only utopian lower taxes and yet increased welfare programs, peace without sacrifice and social systems of equality and blind justice that do not take into account the realities of human nature – only encourage inevitable disappointment, cynicism and apathy in their people and constituents. On the other hand, leaders who govern by dire threats, terrible predictions, emphasizing all society's ills and generating only drabness and a bleak view of the future, destroy human initiative in a fog of pessimism. Moshe, the paradigm of the great and wise leader presents, throughout his discourse here in the book of Dvarim, both sides of the coin. Unfortunately, over the ages, the Jews have not always chosen wisely. People hear what they wish to hear no matter what the speaker really says. We are prone to misquote, misunderstand, repeat phrases out of context and generally ignore what we do not wish to hear and understand. Moshe's attempt to portray the great achievements of the desert - and especially of Sinai - and balance them with the reminders of the tragedies and wars that also mark Israel's journey through the desert, had only limited influence on the people. Our sages teach us that the Jewish people simply did not believe Moshe's dire predictions would ever really occur. God simply had too much invested in the Jewish people. It was a forerunner of our modern "too big to fail" philosophy regarding otherwise corrupt financial institutions. So Moshe's darker side of the coin was never really believed by the Jewish people. They heard only the good – what they wanted to hear – and ignored the rest. There are many Jews today that unfortunately listen to the opposite strains of Jewish life. They despair of our future and our wonderful state. They also only hear what they wish to hear, fueled by a biased and ignorant media and narrow-minded intellectuals. They see no grand future for Israel, the people, the state and the land. A well considered study of Moshe's words and his realistic and balanced message would certainly be in order. Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: **Rabbi Eliezer Parkoff** <rabbiparkoff@gmail.com> date: Aug 18, 2022, 9:01 AM subject: Rabbi Parkoff's Chizuk Letter - Eikev – Segula for Parnossah: Birkas Hamazon With Kavana

Parshas Eikev

Blessings and More Blessings And you will eat and be sated, and you shall bless the Lord, your God, for the good land He has given you. (Devorim 8:10) You Bring Forth Bread from the Ground (Rabbi Bentzion Shafier, "The Shmuz")

One of the berachos (blessings) that we make on a regular basis is hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz, Hashem, I acknowledge that You are the One Who brings forth bread from the ground.

Now, if you think about that berachah, you should ask an obvious question: G-d does not bring forth bread from the ground. A farmer plants a seed and then he harvests it. He then ships that wheat over to the silo, it's then sent to the mill, it's then ground into flour, that flour is then sold to the bakery, the bakery then puts it in trucks, the trucks deliver it to the supermarket. If anything, I should say hamotzi lechem min hasupermarket. But that's not the nusach (wording) of the berachah. And the question is what did chazal (our sages) mean?

And I believe the answer is a fundamental lesson in emunah (belief). Understanding that Hashem created the world is very important, but understanding that Hashem still runs the world is far more important. Meaning to say that as Hashem makes the rain fall in its time and as Hashem decrees that there should be blight or pestilence or not, Hashem decrees that there should be market economies, Hashem decrees that there should be various things put into operation so that humanity should continue. Meaning to say that there are industries, that there are factories, that there is law and order is Hashem running the world. But the entire world is run by Hashem. And I have to recognize that from the mill to the trucker to the supermarket to everything that happens, Hashem is involved in all of it.

And when I pick up that slice of bread and I say hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz, I acknowledge the fact that Hashem, You are the Creator of the world, You made this wondrous thing called a seed that could bring forth wheat. But I also recognize the second stage, that You're involved in the running of the world. Everything that happens, all of the economies, all of the industries, all of the inventions, all of the facts that there is in fact a method and a way for human beings to earn their living and bring it forth. When I eat that slice of bread I acknowledge Hashem as its Creator and that Hashem runs the world to bring this bread to me. * * *

Segula for Parnossah: Birkas Hamazon With Kavana

\It is well known that reciting Parshas HaMann is a segula for parnossah. Perhaps what is less well known is that reciting Birkas Hamazon with kavana is also a very powerful segula for parnossah.

A Jewish survivor of the Holocaust related how he was saved from the clutches of the Nazis during World War II:

When I was a young boy of 12, Rabbi Meir Shapira of Lublin came to our Talmud Torah and tested us in our knowledge of Gemara. The custom in those years was that after a great rabbi examined the young children, he would give a gift to all the students. But Rabbi Meir Shapira had not brought any presents.

So, when he finished examining us, he said to us: "I will give you as a gift a wonderful piece of advice and virtue, with which you will be able to live your entire life in peace and tranquility." Rabbi Meir quoted the awesome words of the Sefer HaChinuch: "I have received a tradition from my teachers, that all who are careful in the blessing of food (Birkas Hamazon) that his food will be given to him with honor all his life." Rabbi Meir further related that this idea is also found in the Bach: "Whomever is careful to say Birkas Hamzaon with kavana is spared from terrible decrees." When I heard the pure words of Rabbi Shapira, I took it upon myself to recite the Birkas Hamazon with proper intent and with the utmost self-sacrifice, said the old Jew.

A few years later, the cursed Nazi villains arrived, conquered the land of Europe, and led the Jews to the camps, and I was among them. As usual, the men were sent to work, and the women and children separated to be sent to the crematoriums to die in the sanctification of Hashem's name.

I was a young bochur, but I tried to stand as tall as I could to look older. I kept whispering with my lips: "My Father in Heaven, I have fulfilled the words of the Bach and blessed Birkas Hamazon with full kavana. You also fulfill the promise that I will be spared and these cursed devils should have no control over me."

When my turn came, I was sent to the right side – to work and not to death. We were then put into another line to determine what work we were fit for. I knew that I couldn't withstand any type of hard labor, so I cried again before the Rock of Israel and begged him that by conscientiously observing Birkas Hamazon, He would save me once again.

Suddenly he heard a whisper. He tilted his head toward the voice and saw that the whisper came from the Jew standing next to him. "Listen," said the man. "When your turn comes, declare that you are a cook and an expert in cooking and baking, and then I will say the same, and that I want you to be my assistant. It seems to me that this will make it easier for us to survive in the camp."

Shimon liked the idea. He did the advice of the Jew, and both were happy to find out that their request had been approved and they were sent to work in the camp kitchen. Working in the kitchen was relatively easy, and the closeness to food made it easier for them to endure the agony of hunger, which was the fate of the camp prisoners.

One day a Nazi officer entered the kitchen. He cast a furious look at young Shimon. "Come here, Yid," he called to him. He gave him a small hammer, took him outside, and ordered, "You have three hours to dig a deep ditch here. If you succeed, you can go back to your work, or else it will be your end."

The hammer was so small it was incapable of even shattering a small stone, much less dig a hole. Shimon knew that he had no chance of digging a pit with only the small hammer, in the absence of suitable tools. He again turned to the Ribono Shel Olam, "Tatte in Himmel, it says in Your Torah that my food will be prepared for me with bounty. Please save me!"

As he stood there davening, a truck stopped to bring supplies to the kitchen. The soldiers who were sitting in the truck decided to abuse the Jewish young man and began to pelt him with apples and vegetables that were in the truck. Shimon was not hurt, and when the soldiers left, fruit and vegetables were scattered all around him.

Suddenly a group of Polish prisoners passed by. They, too, were suffering from starvation from the Germans. When they saw the fruit and vegetables, they asked Shimon to allow them to have some to revive themselves.

At that moment an idea came into Simon's mind. "Let's make a deal," he told the prisoners. "If you can dig a deep hole here, take as many fruits and vegetables as you want." The prisoners responded to the challenge with joy. They were equipped with digging tools, and within minutes, all of them together had managed to dig a deep enough hole. They took their wages and continued on their way.

After three hours the Nazi officer returned to examine the work of the young Jew. Much to his astonishment he saw the deep pit ready as he demanded. "I knew your G-d was protecting you, but I did not know how much," muttered the wicked German, and sent Simon back to the kitchen.

Have a Great Shabbos!

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from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com> date: Aug 18, 2022, 11:02 AM subject: Torah Musings Daily Digest

https://www.torahmusings.com/category/magazine/rav-gidon/meshech-chochmah/

Meshech Chochmah

Overcoming Ourselves, With God's Help

by R. Gidon Rothstein

Torah Awakens Us To Higher Truths

Meshech Hochmah points out an oddity in the first verse of the parsha (originally addressed by Akedat Yitzhak, he says). Moshe Rabbenu says Hashem will reward us in return for following the mishpatim, laws we understand, without mention of the hukkim, laws we do not (or not immediately and intuitively). While he applauds (but does not share) Akedat Yitzhak's answer, he suggests his own: the forty years in the desert converted the hukkim to mishpatim.

Souls sullied by prohibited foods and/or physical intimacy cannot grasp what the purified soul can, he says, and keeping mitzvot sweeps away those barriers.

In his view, hukkim are not beyond human understanding, they are beyond those enmeshed in base pleasures.

The Blessing After Food and Before Torah

Our parsha, 8;10, has the source verse for the only universally agreed beracha de-oraita, blessing ordained by the Torah itself, Birkat Ha-Mazon, the Grace After Meals. In two places in Massechet Berachot, however, the Gemara sources a Biblical obligation to recite a blessing before studying Torah. To explain why we recite a blessing before Torah study and after eating, Meshech Hochmah delves into reasons for the blessings beyond the simple idea of thanking God for bounty.

The feeling of satiation, being full, can make us self-satisfied, a time when people are prone to forget God, as the Torah stresses two verses later, 8;12. To inoculate us, the Torah has us bless God right then, to remind ourselves what verse eighteen does, God is the One Who gives the strength to achieve whatever we accomplish.

With Torah study, the danger comes at the beginning. Most of us bring selfish goals to our study, as Pesahim 68b says, to become wiser or to win renown. Without a kickoff reminder the real and best focus of Torah study is to sustain the Jewish soul (he writes ha-nefesh ha-Yisraeli, the Israelite soul) and give it long life, the student might become arrogant, use Torah knowledge for selfish purposes—as Avot sees the need to warn, do not make it a spade with which to dig. Torah could become, God forbid, a danger rather than a sam mavet, a (spiritually) deadly poison, in the words of Shabbat 88b.

The obligation of birchot ha-Torah therefore comes before the study, to put us in the right frame of mind (he is assuming the blessing is Biblically obligated, based on the verse in Ha'azinu, ki shem Hashem ekra, havu godel le-Elokenu, when I call out in the Name of God, give greatness to our Lord). For Meshech Hochmah, it explains Nedarim 81a, where the Gemara

questions why the children of Torah scholars are often not themselves Torah scholars.

One answer there attributes it to their failure to recite birchot ha-Torah. There are many interpretations, Meshech Hochmah's seems to be that they did not remember to direct their Torah study to proper motives, so it did not pass to their children.

Once having studied, there is no need for a blessing, because Torah itself imbues the needed lessons.

Pleasure Leads Us Astray

The idea Birkat Ha-Mazon puts eating into the proper context explains a passage in Arachin 4a, where the Gemara includes kohanim among those obligated in zimmun, coming together for a joint Birkat Ha-Mazon when three Jews have eaten together. The Gemara puzzles over the need to lay out something obvious—why shouldn't they be obligated in zimmun?-- and answers that kohanim eat kodashim, sacrifices, and we might have thought the atoning quality of the sacrifices would cover the Grace need. For Meshech Hochmah, the Gemara means we might have thought the sanctified nature of the eating would prevent any bad outcomes. It therefore made a point of their need to join the zimmun, because all eating, even sanctified eating, has a physical element that can lead down the wrong path.

The challenge of channeling the physical for the right purposes comes up in Rosh Ha-Shanah 28a, regarding a person who vowed to refrain from receiving any benefit from a certain spring. S/he can nonetheless immerse in the spring for the sake of taharah, becoming ritually purified, in the winter, because the water is cold, the air is cold, the person immersing has no physical pleasure; in the summer, despite the mitzvah element, the person will also enjoy the fact of the cold water, and the vow says s/he cannot.

Although the fact of directing an action to a religious purpose is not enough to remove the physical element, for food, a berachah afterwards can help do the trick.

In a Loving Relationship, Only the Big Stuff Gets Sweated

In the middle of chapter ten of Devarim, Moshe tells the Jewish people "all" Hashem wants of them is to fear God, walk in all God's ways, love God, serve God with all their hearts and souls. It sounds like a lot, where Moshe makes it sound not so daunting. Meshech Hochmah builds his reading off Tanhuma Noah 19, a Midrash intent on how a child and servant experience the same task differently.

A child fulfills duties towards a parent with joy, confident parental love will paper over any flaws in what s/he did; the child can relax into the task, because success—in the form of parental praise-- is almost guaranteed. A servant feels no such security and therefore serves the master with some fear and trepidation.

Verses suggest the contrast characterizes the Jewish people and the nations of the world. Tehillim 2;1 wonders why the nations of the world are concerned, and at the end of the Psalm, verses 11-12, calls for them to serve God with fear, rejoice with trembling. David was warning them, the Midrash says, to be careful in all they do, because they do not have the cushion the Jewish people enjoy. For whom a later verse, 100;2, says "serve God with happiness, come before him with joy."

Meshech Hochmah understands our verse to call for the Jew to have both, to fear God and walk in all God's ways on the one hand, the manner of an oved mi-yir'ah, one who serves out of fear of missing some detail, as well as to love God with all one's heart.

Torah guides us away from the attractions that mislead our morality, such as by supplying a beracha to focus our Torah study and eating in the right ways, all in a framework where we should try to do it all, knowing God loves Jews for whatever they do accomplish.

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from: lammheritage@yu.edu reply-to: yeshivauniversity@yu.edu date: Aug 18, 2022, 5:01 PM
subject: Making Hay out of Religion
www.yu.edu/drlamm

Rabbi Norman Lamm

Suggested Title: **Making Hay out of Religion Ekev, 8/25/1951**

One of the great paradoxes of human nature is the meeting of opposites, the fact that two conditions which are contrary to each other in the extreme can produce the same effects. How frequently are we amused to find the Vatican and the Kremlin towing, with characteristic dogmatism, the same lines; occasionally we are astonished at the coincidence of views of the Wall Street Journal and the Daily Worker. Both extreme Right and extreme Left are alike in condemning the liberal centre, and in demanding blind obedience of their followers. Both were equally hostile, for instance, to the Marshall Plan.

In the same vein, we find that affluence and plenty often produce the same results as do adversity and poverty. It is no secret that indigence breeds immorality and corruption. In the Middle Ages, the Black Plague and the universal poverty combined to cause the greatest crime wave in the recorded history of Europe. Murder, violence and theft were the immediate results of pestilence and destitution. Starvation and privation are bound to unleash the tidal waves of immorality and degeneracy whether in Nablus of Arab Palestine or in Harlem of enlightened New York. Sociologists usually blame low standards of morality on low standards of living. But the astounding fact is that there are people who would behave immorally and irreligiously and unethically when they earn $200 a week, whereas they did not do so when they barely eked out a living at $25 a week. Somehow prosperity will sometimes produce worse effects than will poverty. The recent basketball scandals have shown that boys from wealthy

homes are not necessarily immune from the temptation of the fixer. Today, when America is enjoying comparatively high prosperity, the record for narcotics, sports scandals and government bribery is as black as ever. It is a well-established phenomenon that the nouveau riche, the man who has suddenly become wealthy, leaves his House of Worship and forgets his religion. Even political immorality is practiced by the extremely wealthy. There are some millionaires who are known sympathizers of American Communism, as an "ism" which usually preys on the poor and dejected only.

This principle or paradox was already formulated in the Torah and explained by our Sages. In today's Sidra we read, "ושבעת ואכלת ,And you shall eat and be satisfied," "פן לכם השמרו אחרים אלהים ועבדתם וסרתם לבבכם יפתה ,take heed and beware lest your heart be deceived and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them." And the Rabbis of the Midrash infer from the sequence of the texts that there is a definite relationship between satiety, eating till you're full, to said Moses. " אמר להם: הזהרו שלא תמרדו במקום, שאין אדם מורד במקום אלא מתוך שביעה .idolatry and the Jews, 'Beware of rebelling against G-d - that is, worshipping idols - because it is only out of satisfaction and satiety that one takes to idolatry.'" Was not the Tower of Babel, the symbol of rebellion against G-d, built during a period of affluence? Did not the wickedness of Sodom flourish among a wealthy people? And had the Rabbis of the Midrash lived today, they would add: And was not Berlin, the city which admitted only wealthy "schutz-juden," the center of assimilation? And is not the Jew who moves from Rivington St. to Forest Hills the first to dispense with his Tallis and Tefillin, and ultimately with Shabbos and Kashruth and then all of Judaism? שביעה מתוך אלא במקום מורד אדם אין .Only when people are satisfied and content with themselves do they go ahunting for other gods, whether the money god or the entertainment god or the god whose first commandment is "thou shalt keep up with the Joneses."

Well, we can understand that שביעה ,satiety and contentment, should result in laxity of morals and religion. After a heavy gluttonous meal, one's metabolism rate drops, his pulse and respiration go down and energy is sparse. One feels lazy, and if he forgets his ברכת המזון ,if he skips a מצוה or two or commits a sin or so, it is a result of negligence and indolence rather than במקום מרידה ,rebellion against G-d, idolatry. Why then do the Rabbis, why does the Torah insist that שביעה leads to זרה עבודה ,that eating the satisfaction is the precursor of the worst of all sins, idolatry?

My friends, idolatry, no matter what kind, ancient or modern, is easier than true religion. And because it is easier to practice, success is more readily attainable in idolatry than in monotheism. First of all, it requires less mental

exertion. True religion is more abstract, more difficult conceptually than belief in a tangible idol. The invisible is harder on the intellect than the visible. Then, idolatry is less taxing emotionally than Judaism. It is easier to offer your overt devotions to or embrace a slab of concrete or a totem pole or a Rembrandt or a moneybag or a rabbit's foot than it is to fall in love with an unknown G-d whom your senses cannot even detect. And, lastly, idolatry places less restrictions upon your behavior than does our religion. The creed of the Moloch or Baal never demanded strict Sabbath observance. The religion of the money-bag certainly places no restrictions on corrupt business practices. And the faith in the sacred cow of science requires ethical conduct of no one. All sources indicate that idolatry has frequently sanctioned murder, immorality and downright degeneracy.

Why do normal people fall prey to the curse of idolatry? Why do they succumb to this opiate of easy living? Let us read the verse preceding the one we have previously quoted: ונתתי עשב בשדך לבהמתך ואכלת ושבעת, השמרו לכם פן יפתה לבבכם for fields you in grass give will I And " your animals and you shall eat and be satisfied," and then, "beware of worshipping other gods."

Certainly: If a man is satisfied with eating the grass reserved for his cattle, if he is satisfied to thrive on straw and hay, then certainly his goals are so low that he will be satisfied with the easily attainable idolatry. If his noblest goals are not as high as the stars in heaven, but as low as hay in the field, and if he is satisfied with this grass, then his loftiest aims and ambitions in his entire religious life will be not the dedication to One G-d in heaven but the worship of a dozen cheap clay and wooden statues. ושבעת ואכלת לבהמתך בשדך עשב ונתתי, the danger of idolatry rears its ugly head when people's aims are level with the ground, when they strive for straw and are content with their success in obtaining it.

The great American ideal is "success." But "success" can apply as well to a well-executed murder as to the amassing of a fortune. I have two friends who intended to accelerate their reading this summer. One decided to read ten important novels published during the past year. The other friend was less ambitious and selected three best-sellers for his summer reading list. By today, I hear, the second fellow has well completed his list of three books. He is by all American standards a success. The first fellow finished only eight of the ten books he had set out to read. Again by American standards, he is a dismal failure. Yet who has accomplished more? Is success really a measure of achievement? Is it really necessary for a meaningful life? In this same vein, idolatry is easier to succeed in than Judaism. It all depends on what your original goal is. ושבעת ואכלת לבהמתך בשדך עשב ונתתי. People who are satisfied with straw are rife for idol worship.

Look about you in your places of business and in the streets, and you will meet the typical American Jew of 1951. How high are his goals? Doesn't he seem to think that an insignificant check to charity is the summun bonum of Jewish life? Isn't he satisfied with a Sunday School education for his children? His highest religious ideal is to visit the synagogue on the High Holy Days. And sometimes he is even satisfied with a temple which differs from a cathedral only in minor architectural details. His standard for Kashrus is two sets of dishes in the home and one set all over the rest of the world. In short, our typical American Jew is often satisfied with straw. A bellyful of hay is sufficient to pacify his spiritual hunger, and a thimbleful of ersatz-religion satisfies his cultural requirements. ושבעת ואכלת לבהמתך בשדך עשב ונתתי. He is unfortunately satisfied with the grass for his cattle, and that means that he is prepared to bow and kneel to the next idol. What the American Jew needs is not a face-lifting but a lifting of his level of vision. He must learn to aim higher.

One of the reasons that the Talmud gives for the destruction of the Temple is עבדו שלא הדין משורת לפנים, that the people acted only as was legally expected of them, and no more. They followed the letter of the Law, but failed to rise to the spirit of the Law. This view of the Talmud was given a modern slant in plain English when Sen. Fulbright, commenting on the sad state of American political morals, said that it was "setting a low level" for our national development if "our only goal for official conduct is that it be legal instead of illegal." Indeed, he was expressing the popular fear that our country, the Sanctuary of Democracy, is endangered because its sights are as high as the דין, the strict Constitutional law, and not הדין משורת לפנים, the spirit of the law, the unwritten moral code. A diet of hay & straw is bad for the spiritual health of our nation. We must raise our sights.

Peretz, the famous Yiddish and Hebrew writer, has immortalized the type of Jew whose goals were no higher than לבהמתך בשדך עשב, the animal's straw, in his story "Bontsche Shweig." When Bontsche died, he was tried by the Divine Tribunal, and the Heavenly Court decided that he merited any reward he would chose. Bontsche could not believe it. "Taki? Really?" he asked in wonder. He was reassured. When Bontsche announced his decision, the court and angels looked down, a little ashamed, and the prosecutor laughed. For Bontsche had answered, "Well, if it is so, I would like to have every day, for breakfast, a hot roll and fresh butter."

In the same way, a leader who prods his people on to higher goals and loftier ambition is a leader who loves his people. And, conversely, the leader who lulls his people into complacency and self-satisfaction is a traitor. Some of the laudatory and flattering of epithets were bestowed upon Israel by Balaam, the gentile prophet. Oh, how he praised us! Just compare what he told the Jews to the sermons that Isaiah preached at them. Balaam told them that G-d saw no sin or evil in them; Isaiah said that they were repulsive to G-d and rebellious sons. Balaam told them that glory would be theirs without a struggle; Isaiah warned of impending doom if they would not mend their ways. But who would you say loved Israel more? Certainly, the strict and critical Isaiah! For he set higher and finer goals for his people, goals more difficult to achieve, if success was at all humanly possible. He demanded of them exertion and initiative, while Balaam told them that they could rest on their laurels, that they were successful and nothing else was worth striving for. Balaam was not a friend- he was a bitter enemy. The leader who loved his people will give them not a pat on the back, but a shot in the arm. He will teach them that if ושבעת ואכלת, if they can digest and be satisfied with לבהמתך בשדך עשב, with hay and straw, then they are bound to wind up prostrating themselves before אחרים אלהים, pagan idols.

Our good friend, ex-Ambassador James G. McDonald, warns us in his recent book that "the spiritual future of Israel is not without danger." We can keep our aims low and become a banana republic on the shores of the blue Mediterranean, or we can press foreward towards the mark, the prize of our high calling. Success is assured us if we will be content with hay; but the rewards will be greater if our ideals will be loftier.

Today we welcome the month of Elul. During this month, reserved for penitence and introspection, we will reevaluate and possibly reset our present standards and ideals. We can make them as low as the grass upon the fields for the cattle, or as high as the stars in the infinite heavens above. Which shall it be?

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from: **Joshua Kruger** <genesis@torah.org> to: parsha-halacha@torah.org
date: Aug 18, 2022, 9:25 AM

Parsha Halacha for the Shabbos Table
By Joshua Kruger
Parshas Eikev

Birkas Hamazon - Grace After Meals

The silly person in the following story makes four halachic mistakes. Can you find them?

Can you think of how the story is connected with the parsha?

The Story

In the city of Balagan, on a street named Gevalt, lived a boy named Barney Mevulbal. He was nice and funny and very very very mixed up.

One day Barney Mevulbal entered his favorite restaurant to order some dinner. He sat down at his favorite table, and was pleased to see his favorite waiter.

"I'd like to order a super cheese pizza with extra cheese, please"

The waiter frowned. "Umm… this is still a meat restaurant, so there won't be any pizza today…again".

"Oh. In that case, I'll take two hamburgers with everything on them. But please hold the tomatoes, ketchup, mustard, onions, lettuce, pickles and burgers".

The waiter shortly returned with two hamburger buns.

Barney devoured the first hamburger bun, and then decided to eat the second at a slower pace. "These are great! I want to savor every bite," he thought.

Soon the waiter came to check on Barney. "Can I bring you something else?" he asked. "My work shift finishes at 6 o'clock so I'll be leaving soon".

"It's almost 6 o'clock!?" asked Barney. "Oh no! It's getting late. I need to get home and start my homework."

"I'll bring you a birkon" said the waiter.

"Thanks but I'm in a rush" said Barney. "I'll say birkas hamazon later when I'm back at home". He asked the waiter to place the remaining half of his hamburger bun in a take away bag, paid a very discounted price, and left.

Along the way he bumped into his friend Yehuda at the neighborhood park.

"Hi Yehuda. Sorry, I can't talk. I'm in a rush to get home and start my homework."

Yehuda smiled. "I think you can relax, Barney. The school year finished last week and you won't have to worry about homework for two months. Would you like to play some basketball with me?"

"Absolutely" said Barney.

Forty minutes later, the boys decided to take a break.

"I win again" exclaimed Barney proudly, "I missed the net twenty-five more times that you did, Yehuda!".

"Congratulations" smiled Yehuda, "By the way, what's in that bag?"

"Oh my goodness!" said Barney. "It's the leftovers from my meal. I can't remember if I said birkas hamazon. I'm going to go home and call the restaurant to check. Maybe they'll remember. Would you like the rest of my hamburger bun, Yehuda? I guess it's too late to eat it now."

"Thanks for the offer" said Yehuda, "but we're about to start dinner soon at my home. See you tomorrow!"

Barney quickly made his way home, though he accidentally entered four other homes along the way. By the time he had arrived in the right home, he had completely forgot about birkas hamazon.

"Better get started on my homework. Now where did I leave my pencil?"

An hour later, after searching every drawer and shelf in the fridge, Barney forgot about doing his homework and started thinking about food.

"I sure could go for a hamburger. Wait a minute – I still haven't said birkas hamazon!". He closed the fridge and went to find a birkon… in the laundry machine.

Discussion

Q: What are four halachik mistakes that Barney makes?

1) You should say birkas hamazon in the place that you eat your meal (Shulchan Aruch 184:1). If you forgot, then you should try to go back, though it's not absolutely necessary (Mishna Berura 184:5).

2) If you're not sure whether you said birkas hamazon, then you should say it, provided you ate your fill (Shulchan Aruch 184:4).

3) If you are unsure whether you said birkas hamazon and you happen to have some bread leftover, then it's best to eat the bread and then say birkas hamazon (Shulchan Aruch 184:2). This ensures that you will not say a beracha levatala.

4) You can only say birkas hamazon while you are still full from the meal that you ate. This is learned from the words in our parsha ואכלת ושבעת וברכת. It is a requirement that we be full, ושבעת, in order to say birkas hamazon. For this reason, most poskim rule that birkas hamazon should be said within 72 minutes of finishing the meal (Mishna Berura 184:20). If you forgot, and more than 72 minutes has passed, then you can still say birkas hamazon bedieved, as long as you did not become hungry since the meal and as long as you did not eat anything else in the meantime (Shulchan Aruch 184:5). Once six hours has gone by, it has become too late to say birkas hamazon even if you still do not feel hungry (Magen Avraham 184:9).

Q: How is our story connected to the parsha?

A: Parshas Eikev discusses the mitzva to say birkas hamzaon (Devarim 8:10).

(Written by Josh and Tammy Kruger, in collaboration with Rabbi Yehoshua Pfeffer of the Institute for Dayanim)

Parsha Halacha for the Shabbos Table © 2022 by Torah.org.

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from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com> date: Aug 17, 2022, 11:03 AM subject: Torah Musings Daily Digest

A Shul Kiddush as the "Third" Meal

by R. Daniel Mann

Question: Can I count the cake and other foods I eat at a "shul Kiddush," followed by a regular Shabbat meal at home, as the second and third meals of Shabbat?

Answer: The question arises only if one is lenient on what constitutes seuda shlishit. The gemara (Shabbat 117b) derives from the pasuk about the manna to be eaten on Shabbat (Shemot 16:25), which uses the word "hayom" (today) three times, that one should have three meals on Shabbat. The straightforward reading of the gemara is that the three meals are primarily equivalent. Since the first two Shabbat meals must include (two loaves of) bread (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 274:1; ibid. 289:1), we should expect the same for seuda shlishit. Indeed, this is the principle opinion of the Shulchan Aruch (OC 291:4-5), except when it is quite difficult (ibid.).

On the other hand, the Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) cites as a minority opinion the possibility to fulfill seuda shlishit with foods other than bread. The Talmudic source for possible leniency is a gemara (Sukka 27a) about a rejected opinion about Sukkot. R. Eliezer says that one must eat fourteen meals on Sukkot and that if he missed one, he should eat an extra meal on the night of Shemini Atzeret. The gemara asks that the bread meal he has on Shemini Atzeret is for that day and answers that the hashlama (make-up meal) is by eating minei targima (there is a machloket exactly what that is – see Tosafot ad loc.) in addition to the regular meal. Tosafot (Berachot 49b) cites Rabbeinu Tam as learning from here that one does not need bread to be considered a modest halachic meal, for example, for seuda shlishit. Most Rishonim (see Beit Yosef, OC 291) say that at least seuda shlishit requires specifically bread because of the derivation from the manna. There are, though, those who do not have seuda shlishit with bread, and they have whom to rely upon.

As mentioned, all agree that bread is required for the second Shabbat meal, even though cake is enough of a meal to give Kiddush its halachic status (Shulchan Aruch, OC 273:5). So, your regular meal is needed to count for the second meal. According to some, that meal must start before chatzot (Aruch Hashulchan, OC 288:2). If this meal started before the earliest time for Mincha (half an hour after chatzot), it is too early for seuda shlishit (Shulchan Aruch, OC 291:2), and even if it extends from morning to afternoon it cannot serve as both the second and third meals (see Levushei Srad ad loc.). Stopping the meal with Birkat Hamazon and then starting a new meal again, could be a potential possibility (see Shulchan Aruch, OC 291:3 and Mishna Berura ad loc. 14). However, this is presumably not a more attractive practical option than making a small seuda shlishit some time later.

It is plausible to make the following halachic claim. Perhaps after having a proper daytime bread meal, we can say that the shul Kiddush constituted retroactively a third meal. While there is an expectation that there will be three meals at three different times of Shabbat (Rambam, Shabbat 30:9), perhaps the important thing is that at the end, fulfilling all of the requirements (two full meals, having eaten after the time of Mincha) in whatever order is enough. Rav Shimon Sofer (Hitorerut Teshuva I:74) left this as an open question and a possible limud z'chut for those who have a pre-meal Kiddush and do not eat seuda shlishit. The Shevet Halevi (I:57) does not view this a viable approach. He cites the Bach (OC 291) who says that the logic of Rabbeinu Tam to treat a non-bread meal as a meal applies only when it follows a full daytime meal, as another full meal might not be

expected. However, a small meal before the big meal is not considered a halachic meal toward the three required meals.

In summary, while it is plausible that the setup you describe could remove the need for seuda shlishit, it relies on unlikely assumptions. Therefore, it is significantly better to either have bread at the small meal (i.e., Kiddush) or to have at least a small seuda shlishit sometime in the afternoon.

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from: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net> reply-to: info@theyeshiva.net date: Aug 18, 2022, 4:51 PM subject: Never Broken - Essay by Rabbi YY

Never Broken

How a Rebbe Helped a Survivor Embrace His Fragments

The Jewish Perspective

Ammunition had run out for a unit in the Russian army, but it was still under fierce attack. “Take out your bayonets,” said the corporal, “we are going to engage the enemy in hand-to-hand combat.”

“Please sir,” said Pvt. Finkelstein. “Show me my man. Maybe he and I can reach some kind of agreement.”

The Survivor

Let me share a story[1]:

After the war, a Holocaust survivor came to visit his one-time spiritual master, the famed Rebbe of the Chassidic dynasty of Ger, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter[2]. This broken Jew had been deported to the death camps together with his wife, children, relatives, and the entire community. The man's wife and children were gassed, his relatives exterminated and his entire community wiped out. He emerged from the ashes a lonely man in a vast world that had silently swallowed the blood of six million Jews. This Jew lost one more thing in the camps: his G-d. After what he experienced in the Nazi death camps, he could not continue believing in a G-d who allowed Auschwitz.

Although after the war he made aliyah to Eretz Israel (then known as Palestine), he completely abandoned Jewish practice and observance. Yet he missed his old Rebbe and went to visit him in Tel Aviv. The Gerer Rebbe himself lost many grandchildren and relatives in the Holocaust. In addition, nearly all of his 200,000 followers were wiped out by the Germans. The Rebbe of Ger and his immediate children managed to escape Warsaw in 1940 and arrived in Eretz Israel soon after.

Upon hearing the story of his disciple, the Rebbe of Ger broke into tears. The man and his Rebbe sat together mourning what they had lost. After a long period of weeping, the Gerer Rebbe wiped his tears and communicated—in Yiddish—the following idea.

"Before Your Eyes"

In his farewell address to his people, in the Torah portion of Eikev, Moses recounts the moment when he descended from Mount Sinai with the two Divine tablets to present to the Jewish people[3]:

"I descended from the mountain," Moses recalls, "the mountain was still burning with fire and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. I immediately saw that you had sinned to G-d, making a calf. You were so quick to turn from the path that G-d had prescribed. "I grasped the two tablets, and threw them down from my two hands, and I smashed them before your eyes."

Moses proceeds to relate how after much toil he succeeded in “convincing” G-d to forgive the Jewish people for their sin. He then, as mentioned above, carved out a second pair of tablets to replace the first ones. Though the two sets were identical in content, containing the Ten Commandments, the second pair did not possess the same Divine quality as the first tablets, which were "G-d's handiwork and G-d's script[4]." The second tablets were Moses’ creation, endorsed by G-d, but not G-d’s own creation.

Now, considering the well-known meticulousness of each word in the Bible, Moses' words "I smashed them before your eyes" seem superfluous. Suppose Moses had turned around and broken the tablets out of view; would that in any way have lessened the tragedy? Why did Moses find it important to emphasize that the breaking of the tablets occurred "before your eyes"[5]?

Two Worlds

What Moses was saying, explained the Rebbe of Ger, was that "I smashed the tablets only before your eyes." The shattering of the tablets occurred only before your eyes and from your perception. In reality, though, there exists a world in which the tablets have never been broken.

What Moses was attempting to communicate, the Rebbe of Ger explained is that what may seem to us as utter destruction and chaos, does not always capture the complete story. "I smashed them before your eyes." Before your eyes, there is nothing but devastation. Yet, what in our world bespeaks total disaster may, in a different world, be wholesome.

“As difficult as it is to digest, the Gerer Rebbe went on to say, “there is meaning in the absurdness of history; there is dignity in the valley of tears. G-d—the G-d who transcends all human logic, understanding, and imagination—was present in our broken pieces."

"As difficult as it is for you and me to believe," the Rebbe concluded, "I want you to know that the extermination of our families, our communities, and our people occurred only 'before our eyes.' There remains a world in which the Jewish people are wholesome. Beneath the surface of our perception, there exists a reality in which every single Jew from Abraham till our present day is alive, his or her soul absolutely intact."

"The day will come," said the Rebbe of Ger, "when that world will be exposed. G-d will transform our perceptions and paradigms. He will mend our broken tablets and our broken nation. We will discover how the tablets were really never broken and the Jewish people were always complete."

These are words that could be effective only when communicated by a man who experienced the suffering of the war on his own flesh. Pain is not an intellectual subject; it is raw, personal, and real. When the Rebbe of Ger spoke these words, he spoke them with tears, with grief. He was not an objective preacher of religion; together with the Holocaust survivor, he walked through his tunnel of darkness. Thus, his words gave back to this broken Jew his soul, his faith, and his courage.

Shattered Dreams

Notwithstanding the grand distinctions, the above message applies to our lives as well. Many of us once owned a set of sacred tablets that at some point in our lives were destroyed. It may have been the death of a mother or father at a young age, bringing to an abrupt end the nurturing and security a child so desperately needs from parents. It may have been any other form of pain, abuse, or loss that you experienced during your life that denied you the love, confidence, joy, and optimism you once called your own. It may be profound fear, shame, insecurity, guilt, disappointment, mistrust, or other forms of emotional trauma that afflict you, shattering your inner sacred and Divine “tablets.”

Many of us create for ourselves a second pair of "tablets" in order to substitute for the first ones that were lost. But they are not quite the same. The second set of "tablets" lacks the magic and the innocence of the original "tablets" that no longer exist. In the depth of our hearts, we crave to reclaim something of the wonder of the old tablets.

But it is to no avail: The clock of life never turns back. Here lay the empowering message of Moses to his beloved people before his own demise: There is a secret world in which your first tablets were never broken. Notwithstanding the abuse and pain you experienced, each of you possesses a core self that forever remains invincible, pure, and sacred.

What is more, when your perception expands, you might discover how your shattered dreams may be part of your individual path to wholesomeness. Wholesomeness does not come in one shape; for some, it comes in the form of a broken heart. What is broken in one level of perception may be wholesome in another.

The Final Month

In a few days, we will commence the last month of the Hebrew calendar, known as the month of Elul, when we bid farewell to a year gone by, and prepare to embrace a new one in its stead, beginning on Rosh Hashanah.

The great sage and mystic Rabbi Nathan Shapiro (d. 1640 in Krakow, Poland) writes[6] that the four Hebrew letters of the name Elul (spelled

Aleph, Lamed, Vuv, Lamed) is the acronym of the four Hebrew words "Aron, Luchos, V'shevrei, Luchos" (which also begin with the Hebrew letters Aleph, Lamed, Vuv, Lamed). These words, quoted from the Talmud[7], mean this: "The Ark containing the whole tablets and the broken tablets."

What does this mean? In the book of Exodus, the Torah captures the dramatic tale of how, following the Revelation at Sinai, G-d carved out two tablets, engraved the Ten Commandments on them, and presented them to Moses on Mount Sinai. When Moses descended the mountain, however, he observed that the Israelites had created a golden calf as an idol. Seeing this, Moses threw the tablets from his hands and smashed them on the ground. After a powerful confrontation with G-d, Moses persuades Him, as it were, to forgive the Jewish people for their betrayal. Moses then, acting on G-d's instructions, carves out a second pair of tablets, to replace the smashed first ones. When the Ark was built to be located inside the holiest chamber in the Tabernacle the Jews erected in the desert, both sets of tablets were placed therein: the second whole pair of tablets, as well as the fragmented pieces of the first smashed tablets[8].

But what is the connection to the month of Elul? Why does the name of this month symbolize this idea of the Ark containing both sets of Tablets, the complete ones, and the broken ones?

The above story can provide insight. The unique power of the final month of the year, the name of which spells out the words "The Ark containing the whole Tablets and the broken Tablets" is this: This is the month that allows you to build in your personal life an "ark" which will contain not only your second complete tablets but will also embrace the broken pieces of your first tablets. This is the time when you are empowered and can pick up the broken pieces of your life and discover that there is a part of yourself that was never really broken.

What is more, during this month you may lift up with tender love every broken component of your life, learning how each of them constituted another hue of wholesomeness.

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[1] I read the story in a sermon by Rabbi Moshe Weinberger shlita, spiritual leader of Aish Kodesh Institute in Woodmere, N.Y. Afterward I heard it from an elder Gerer Chassid who visited the Imrei Emes as a young man in Poland before the war. Another Gerer Chassid told me that this insight was presented by the Gerer Rebbe at a prayer gathering in the middle of the Holocaust, on 20 Kislev, 5703, in the "Churvah."

[2] Rabbi Avraham Mordechai (born in 1866), known as the Imrei Emes, was the third Rebbe of Ger and passed away in 1948 in Jerusalem. The city was under siege at the time, so he was buried in the courtyard of his yeshiva.

[3] Deuteronomy 9:15-17.

[4] Exodus 32:16.

[5] Cf. Abarbanel to Deuteronomy 9:17. Likkutei Sichos vol. 9 p. 241; vol. 26 p. 252. My gratitude to Shmuel Levin, a writer and editor in Pittsburgh, for his editorial assistance.

[6] Sefer Megaleh Amukos.

[7] Bava Basra 14b.

[8] On a literal level the connection is this: On the 29th of Av, at the end of Moses' second 40-day period on Mount Sinai, G-d agreed to give the second set of tablets to Israel. The following day Moses ascended again, and remained on the mountain throughout the month of Elul. On Yom Kippur he descended with the new set of tablets (Rashi to Exodus).

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https://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/headlines-breaking-stories/417438/rav-elyashiv-on-weddings-2.html

Rav Elyashiv zt"l on Weddings and Rav Yaakov Yishayahu Blau zt"l on Correcting a Kesuvah at a Wedding

August 14, 2022 1:35 pm3

By **Rabbi Yair Hoffman** for the Five Towns Jewish Times

In honor of the wedding of the author's daughter this evening, please find below some Psakim from rav Elyashiv zt"l regarding weddings. Unless otherwise noted, these p'sakim were heard from Rav Elyashiv zt"l by either Rav Lipa Israelson or one of his brothers.

THE WEDDING CHUPAH _____

MESADER KIDDUSHIN

1. One should only conduct a wedding under the auspices of a Rav or Talmid Chochom that is knowledgeable in matters of Kiddushin. He is clled the Mesader Kiddushin.

2. Someone who married a woman through a Mesader Kiddushin who is a Reform Rabbi r"l, should ask a shailah if there is validity to his Kiddushin and marriage. It is possible that he must perform a Chuppah anew.

3. There are those who have the custom that the bride's father comes to greet the groom at his home in order to accompany him to the Chuppah. Similarly, the mother of the groom comes to greet the bride. However, with the agreement of both sides it is permitted to forego this custom.

THE CUSTOM OF SHOSHVINIM

4. The custom is for two people to bring the groom to the Chuppah, one on the right and one on the left. They are called "Shoshvinim." The wives of the Shoshvinim bring the bride to the Chuppah. The father of the groom accompanies him on the right, and his mechutan accompanies the groom on the left. The mother of the bride is to her right and the mother-in-law is to her left. The Shoshvinim also accompany the groom to the bedekin which is called the "Hinoma."

WHO ARE THE SHOSHVINIM

5. The common custom is for the parents of the bride and groom to be the Shoshvinim. When this is not possible, some have the custom for the Shoshvinim to be the father and a sister of the groom or bride, or a mother and a brother of the groom or bride. Similarly, the Shoshvinim could be any husband and wife, even if they are not the groom or the bride's parents.

6. There is no problem if the Shoshvinim are from a second marriage, such as if the groom's mother is married to a second husband, who is not the groom's father. She can be on the left of the bride and her husband can be on the right of the groom, and vice versa. There is no problem with either way. Some, however, are careful about this. However, if there is a need to do it in this manner, there is no need to be concerned.

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THE BEDEKIN

7. Before the Chuppah, the groom is escorted by the Shoshvinim ad the two witnesses to the women's section, to the place where the bride is sitting. The groom covers the head of the bride with a veil or some other designated garment. This is called the Hinoma. According to many authorities, the covering of the bride with a Hinoma is called the Chuppah.

8. The bride and groom should have in mind that the covering of the veil on her head is a Kinyan of marriage just like Chuppah. It is the custom for the Mesader Kiddushin to tell the father of the bride that he should go to his daughter and tell her that the covering is a form of Kinyan and is not just a mere procedure alone.

9. On account of this, the witnesses as well need to see the groom actually coverin the bride. They should be aware that this is a Kinyan, as mentioned above.

10. There is no need to have the groom acquire the veil.

11. It is perfectly acceptable to make the Chuppah in the evening, there is no need to make it in specifically in the daytime.

12. Chuppah is a Kinyan of marriage. Therefore, the bride and groom must know and have the intention that the Chuppah is creating the marriage.

13. However, in regard to all matters discussed above where the bride and groom must have these things in mind, if they did not have such an intention at the actual time itself, but they did know beforehand that they had to have that in mind, there is nothing to be concerned about and it is perfectly fine.

14. The groom does not have to acquire possession of the place of the Chuppah.

15. It is the custom to make the Chuppah under the sky as a good sign that their descendants should be likened to the stars in the sky. One should be very stringent in the matter and not change the custom.

16. It is the custom to throw upon the groom wheat kernels during the time that he comes to cover the bride. Nowadays the custom is to throw colored paper. There is no concern of following the ways of the gentiles in this.

CUSTOMS OF THE CHUPPAH

17. Some have the custom for the groom to wear a Kittel during the Chuppah. Others have the custom to wear the Kittel in such a manner that it cannot be seen from outside. However our (Rav Elyashiv's) custom is not to wear a Kittel at all during the Chuppah.

18. One must place ashes on the forehead of the groom in the spot wear he wears Tefillin to commemorate the mourning of Jerusalem. This is placed before one goes to the Chuppah.

19. Some have the custom of placing the ashes when he wrapped in paper so as not to soil the clothing of the groom.

20. One places the ashes on the head and not on the Kippah.

CANDLES

21. The Shoshvinim hold lit candles in their hands when they escort the groom and bride, and during the Chuppah.

22. There is no need for the bride to remove all her jewelry before the Chuppah.

23. There is also not need to undo the knots in one's clothing. Nor is there a need to empty all the items in one's pockets.

24. The Kallah and the female Shoshvinos surround the groom seven times, before they bless the blessings of Airusin.

25. After the circling, the bride stands to the right of the groom and they face east. In Jerusalem they face toward the Temple mount. The Mesader Kiddushin faces the bride and groom.

26. After the blessings of Kiddushin, the groom breaks a whole cup made of glass with his right foot [so that it not cause damage it is the custom to wrap the glass in paper].

27. If they forgot to bring a glass, it is permitted to take a glass from the hall on the condition that one pays for it afterward.

28. A left-footed person breaks the glass with his left foot which is considered like his right foot.

THE WEDDING RING

29. The custom is to marry with a ring. There are reasons for this cited in the Tikkunei Zohar. It is possible to marry with either a gold or silver ring.

30. The wedding ring must not have a precious stone. However, there is no problem if designs are etched onto the ring, nor is there a problem of how many karats of gold are in the ring.

31. It is our custom that the ring be round and not rectangular.

32. The Mesader Kiddushin shows the ring to the witnesses at the time of the Chuppah and asks: "Is the ring worth a shaveh prutah?" They answer, "Yes." It must be said in a language that the bride understands.

33. If the ring was purchased from the funds of the groom's father, the groom should ask the father to give him permission to take ownership of the ring. The groom should acquire it – that is he should hold it in his hand and intend to acquire it as his own.

34. The Mesader Kiddushin should ask the groom before the Kiddushin if the ring belongs to him.

THE WITNESSES

35. One must designate two kosher witnesses that are kosher for testifying – that is the Mesader Kiddushin or the groom should designate the witnesses. It is emphasized that only they are the witnesses to the exclusion of others.

36. The Mesader Kiddushin tells the groom to say: "I am designating you as witnesses for the bedekin, the kiddushin, the Chupah, and the Yichud room."

37. The witnesses should be checked and investigated that they are not related to either the groom or the bride, or to each other. Witnesses that are related are pasul – invalid.

38. One may not take the Shadchan as a witness to the Kiddushin. Even though technically he is kosher, because he has a bias to the matter.

39. A mechutan (one's other child's in-law) is technically permitted to be a witness. However, ideally it is preferable to take another witness so that it will not appear that they are related.

THE BIRCHAS AIRUSIN

40. Before the groom gives the ring to the bride, the Mesader Kiddushin recites two blessings: Borei Pri HaGafen and v'tzivanu al haArayos.

41. Ideally, there should be ten men present who have reached the age of Bar Mitzvah at the time that the blessing is recited.

42. The groom should not recite this blessing himself, rather the Rabbi who is arranging the wedding recites it.

43. It is forbidden for the bride and groom to interrupt with speech between when the blessing is recited and the giving of the ring.

44. The person reciting the blessing must have in mind to be Motzi the groom and bride their obligations in the blessings. The bride and groom must have in mind to have their obligation fulfilled. They answer Amain to the brachos. The Kallah should also answer Amain to the blessings of Airusin. There is no hefsek interruption in doing so between the Hagafen blessing and her drinking the wine. This is because the blessing is on her account, and that she is a participant in the blessing.

45. The bride and groom and at least nine others who are present must hear the blessings from the person reciting them.

46. Any blessing that must be recited in front of ten people, one must be careful to ensure that at least ten [Torah and Mitzvah observing] people should hear it from the mouth of the person reciting the blessing and not through a microphone. For if they hear the blessing on through a microphone – they have not fulfilled their obligation. It is as if they have recited the blessings of the Choson alone. One must be very careful in this for at times even those who are standing next to the person reciting the blessing do not hear his voice itself but only the microphone.

47. After the blessing the bride and groom drink from the Kos Airusin – just a sip and nothing further. The Mesader Kiddushin does not have to drink from the cup.

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GIVING THE RING

48. Before giving the ring, the veil is lifted from before the bride for a brief moment so that the witnesses will see her face [When they lift the veil so that the bride can drink, one may also lift it a bit higher so that the witnesses will see her.] The Mesader Kiddushin asks the witnesses whether the wedding band has the value of a shaveh prutah. The witnesses respond, "Yes." Similarly, he should ask the groom if the ring belongs to him.

The face of the bride should be covered when he gives the ring.

Before giving the ring the grooms says to the bride aloud, so that the bride and the witnesses can hear: Harei at mekudeshes li b'tabaas zu kedas Moshe v'yisroel.

The groom places the ring with his right hand upon the right hand of the bride.

He places the ring on the finger next to her thumb.

The witnesses should try to see the groom placing the ring on her finger.

If one of them is left handed, he should place it with his stronger hand (or on her stronger hand if she is left-handed).

The groom gives the Kallah the Kesuvah before witnesses. The custom is that the Kallah gives the Kesuvah to her mother.

THE KINYAN

49. How is the Kinyan made? One of the witnesses takes a handkerchief that belongs to him, and give it to the groom. The groom lifts it up in front of the witnesses for the purpose of Kinyan. He has in mind to obligate himself in all of the obligations set forth in the Ksuvah. The custom is for the groom to return the handkerchief to the witness.

50. The witnesses must sign onto the Kesuvah after the Kabalas Kinyan.

THE TIME OF KABALAS KINYAN

51. There are those who have the custom to make the Kinyan after the writing of the Kesuvah prior to going to the Chupah, and then the witnesses sign on the Kesuvah. However, it is worthy to do the Kinyan under the Chuppah, after the Kiddushin, and after the reading of the Kesuvah until the word, "V'kanina." Then the kinyan is performed and the two witnesses sign. After the witnesses sign the reading of the Kesuvah is continued until the end of the names of the witnesses. This is how it is worthy to proceed.

DATE

52. They should be careful to ensure that the date written in the Kesuvah be on the same day as the Chuppah and the Kiddushin.

A CHUPPAH THAT WAS DELAYED

53. If they see that the Chuppah is going to be delayed until after sundown, and the date on the Kesuvah is before sundown, the Kinyan should be made in front of the witnesses before sundown. This is even if it is still before the Chuppah and the Kiddushin. However, this is not so ideal, therefore it is preferable under such circumstances when the Chuppah is delayed until after sundown to write the next day's date on the Kesuvah.

54. It is proper to indicate in the Kesuvah the last name of the bride and the groom, such as Reuvain Ben Yaakov l'mishpachas [to the family]_____. Likewise, the witnesses should also include their last name. For example, Shimon Ben Yaakov Weiss, aid [witness].

55. One should not write after the bride's name "Sh'tichye" [she should live – a common term], so that it not appear as another name of the bride.

56. If the groom is a Levi, one should write, "HaLevi" each time one writes his name. When they write his name the first time and the last time where his father's name is included [or her name if her father is a Levi], one should also write, "HaLevi" there as well.

57. Someone who is called by his nickname, such as if his name is "Yoseph" and they call him "Yossi," there is no need to write anything in the Kesuva other than "Yoseph."

58. Foreign [or Yiddish] names such as Fayga or Fruma should be spelled with an Aleph at the end. However, if they normally spell it with a "Hay" at the end, then it should be written with a "Hay."

59. After the Kesuvah is read, the cup of wine is filled and the blessings are recited again, the Borei Pri HaGafen and six additional blessings – these are known as the Sheva Brachos.

60. The groom does not recite these blessings. Rather, others are honored with reciting them.

61. One may honor a number of people with these blessings and there is no obligation that one person recite them all or a portion of them. However, the first blessing of Hagafen should not be separated from the blessing of "Shehakol Bara lichvodo."

62. These blessings are not an obligation of the bride and groom. Rather, they are an obligation upon the gathered congregation at the Chuppah. Therefore, there is no need for the bride and groom to have in mind to fulfill their Mitzvah with these blessings.

63. It is the custom of Ashkenazim after the Chuppah to have the bride and groom seclude themselves in the Yichud room (See Ramah EH 55:1).

64. It is proper for the groom to acquire use of the Yichud room from the owners of the wedding hall. That is, he should give a prutah's worth of coinage to the owner of the hall or its director with whom one transacts with in regard to weddings.

65. After the Chuppah before the bride and groom enter the Yichud room, the witnesses should examine the Yichud room to ensure that it is empty of people, and is closed from all sides, and that there be no windows even ones thata re very high, whee it would be possible to glance into the room.

66. Afterward, the bride and groom should enter the Yichud room, and they lock the door from the inside. The witnesses stand outside for five miutes.

67. This yichud is called "Nissuim" according to many Rishonim. Therefore, the bride and groom should have in mind that they are making a Kinyan Nissuin.

68. It is the custom for the bride and groom to eat in the Yichud room.

SUMMARY OF THE PROTOCOLS AT THE CHUPPAH • The writing of the Kesuvah with all its details • Kinyan of the Yichud Room from the administrators of the wedding hall • Kinyan of the ring to the groom • Preparing the glass and the wine for the wedding blessing and Sheva Brachos • Preparing the glass to be broken and the candles for the Shoshvinim • Checking to ensure that the witnesses are kosher and are not related to the wedding parties • The groom designates the witnesses and says, "I am designating you as witnesses for the Henoma, the Kiddushin, the Chuppah, and the Yichud room." • The placing of the ashes on the head of the groom. • Lighting the candles for those who accompany the groom. • Covering the bride with the veil (the Hinuma) by the groom. • It is on the witnesses to see the covering of the bride with the veil. They should know that this is also part of the wedding process. • The bride and groom should have in mind that the covering of the veil is for the wedding process. • The bride encircles the groom seven times. • The bride and groom have in mind to be yotzeh with the blessings being recited. • The Mesader Kiddushin recites the HaGafen and the blessings of marriage. • The groom and bride taste from the cup. • The cup is lifted in front of the bride in a manner that the witnesses will see her. • The Mesader Kiddushin asks if the ring belongs to him. • The Mesader Kiddushin asks the witnesses if it has the value of a prutah. • He should warn the groom that he should complete the saying of "Harei aht" before he gives her the ring. • It is upon the witnesses to make sure that they hear the harei aht from the mouth of the groom. • It is upon the witnesses to see the giving of the ring from the hand of the groom to the hand of the bride. • The breaking of the glass. • Reading the Kesuvah. • Performing the Kinyan and the witnesses signing on the Kesuvah • The giving of the Kesuvah from the groom to the bride in front of witnesses. • The bride gives the Kesuvah to her mother. • Sheva Brachos. • The groom and bride taste from the cup. • The witnesses check the Yichud room to ensure that it is empty and locked. • The bride and groom enter the Yichud room and lock the door from inside. • The witnesses wait for five minutes outside of the Yichud room.

CORRECTING A KESUVAH

It may be worthwhile to print this next part out and save it for emergencies at a wedding, because it happens more often then we think. In statistics that this author has kept, it happens on average between 1% and 2% of the time. However, it can also happen almost ten percent of the time as well depending upon the experience of the Mesader Kiddushin.

A mistake is made in the Kesuvah itself at the wedding. A frantic call is made to a Posaik: "We have no other Kesuvah – what should we do?" [The reader may wish to print this in case of emergencies].

At times, the Posaik cannot be reached, in which case calls are made to Posaik after Posaik. Sometimes, when the Posaik can be reached, he may suggest that the Kesuvah be re-written by hand. All this is often done behind closed doors and can often lead to delays at the wedding.

There is, however, another possibility, of which many Rabbonim are unaware. It is possible to repair the mistake, as long as the following three conditions are fulfilled:

One notes on the bottom of the Kesuvah that the correction was, in fact, made The notation references the line where the correction was made The witnesses attest to the correction. This is called a Kiyum of the correction. This concept is found in chapter 44 of the Choshain Mishpat section of Shulchan Aruch subparagraph 5.

HOW TO NOTE THE CORRECTION

The mistakes generally fall into four categories:

A missing letter A missing name or missing word A misspelled letter or word An extra letter or word. We will go through the correction of each of the above cases.

If a letter was left out of the original, one may add that missing letter in its place– even above the area, and one adds the following notation at the bottom of the Kesuvah: Letter X on line Y was added. Vehakol sharir vekayam, and then the witnesses sign.

The Hebrew for this is:

אות ___ בשורה שלישית תלויה והכל שריר וקיים.

If an entire word or name was left out, the word is added in place – above the area and one adds on the bottom of the Kesuvah: Word X on line Y was added. Vehakol sharir vekayam, and then the witnesses sign.

The Hebrew for this is:

תיבת ___ בשורה שלישית תלויה והכל שריר וקיים.

If just one letter was incorrect, it can be crossed out, erased, scratched off, or written over [called ha-avaras kulmus] in its place and one adds on the bottom of the Kesuvah: Letter X on line Y was erased [or written over] Vehakol sharir vekayam and then the witnesses sign.

The Hebrew for this is:

אות ____ בשורה רביעית מחוקה והכל שריר וקיים

If it was written over, then the Hebrew notation that is to be added is as follows:

אות _____ בשורה ____ בהעברת קולמוס והכל שריר וקיים

If it was a word and not just a letter that was corrected, use the above formulation but replace אות with תיבת.

If there was an entire extra word that was crossed out, erased, or scratched off, then one adds on the bottom תיבת _____ בשורה ____ מחוקה והכל שריר וקיים.

TWO SITUATIONS IN WHICH CORRECTIONS CAN BE MADE

The Kesuvah can be corrected in either of two situations:

1] when the witnesses did not yet sign the document – in which case the notation is to be made above where the witnesses sign.

2] After the witnesses have already signed – in which case the same witnesses must sign again below the notation of the correction.

In the second case, the correction can even be made several days later.

Please note that one cannot make a correction on top of a correction on a Kesuvah. You get one chance. [See Nachalas Shiva 3:23]

The above is based upon the psakim of Rav Yaakov Yishayahu Blau zt"l, author of the Pischei Choshain (and one of this author's first Poskim – dating back some 40 years ago). See Kovaitz Tevunos Aryeh Vol. II.

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Parshas Eikev: Mosheh's Shiur, Part II

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

I. MOSHEH'S "SHIUR" CONTINUES…

As noted in the last two shiurim, Sefer D'varim is made up of three sections:
Chapters 1-11: Historical Recitation and Exhortation
Chapters 12-26: Laws
Chapters 27-33: Covenant and Blessing

In last week's shiur, we discussed the three lessons (and one significant interruption) which comprise the bulk of Parashat Va'et'hanan and form the first half of the "exhortative" component of Mosheh Rabbenu's speech. In that presentation, I argued that those three lessons are an integrated and "spiraling" educational experience, culminating in a description of the ideal relationship with God.
As we will soon discover, the "shiur" (instruction) which commences near the beginning of Parashat Va'et'hanan (D'varim 4:1) does not conclude with the climactic statement "Sh'ma Yisra'el" which "headlines" the final lesson; indeed, the shiur continues until the end of Parashat Ekev (11:21).

In order to understand the rest of Mosheh's "shiur", we will build on last week's presentation. First, a brief recap is in order.

II. A BRIEF RECAP

In last week's discussion, I suggested that each new component of Mosheh's "shiur" is marked by the introductory phrase "Sh'ma Yisra'el" (or "Yisra'el Sh'ma").

This phrase, found (in inverted form) at 4:1, introduces the first lesson: The nature of God and His incorporeality.

The same phrase, at 5:1, introduces the repetition of the Decalogue and, significantly, the story behind Mosheh's assuming the role of lawgiver. These two lessons are intertwined and somewhat interdependent, as each utilizes the national experience at Sinai as the foundation for the lesson.

"Sh'ma Yisra'el" appears a final time (in Va'et'hanan), at 6:4, in introducing our ideal relationship with God – "You shall love Hashem your God…".

In analyzing these three lessons, we noted the strange interruption (4:41-49) of the narrative of Mosheh's designation of the three (not-yet-functional) cities of refuge on the East Bank. I suggested that the basic lesson of the *Arei Miklat* – that intent plays a critical role in the performance of Mitzvot – was a valuable insight into the "inner workings" of the Torah. Mosheh, as the consummate teacher, interrupted his lesson to demonstrate a law which exemplifies the value of intent and attitude as vehicles for moral perfection.
Last week's discussion gave the impression that the "famous" "Sh'ma Yisra'el" (6:4) was the beginning of the final lesson in Mosheh's "shiur". As we will see further on, there are some more lessons that make up this "shiur"- and they take us nearly to the end of Parashat Ekev.

III. THE STRUCTURE OF OUR PARASHA

Parashat Ekev is made up of four distinct sections:

1) 7:12-8:20 – the "Ekev" section (another interruption between lessons)
2) 9:1-10:11 – the fourth lesson
3) 10:12-11:12 – the fifth lesson
4) 11:13-21 is a summary of the lessons (this section, along with the "epilogue" of our Parashah, 11:22-25 will not be addressed in this discussion.)

Although we will devote some space to the fourth and fifth lessons – including an explanation of how these divisions are evidenced in the text – the focus of this presentation will be on the "Ekev" interruption which begins our Parashah.

EVIDENCE FOR THE DIVISIONS

The division charted above could certainly be challenged – it does not break down by chapters or by Parashiot (paragraphs) – what evidence is there for the existence of this structure?

The easiest component to identify is the fourth lesson. Just as the first three lessons (in Parashat Va'Et'hanan) began with "Sh'ma

Yisra'el" (or "Yisra'el Sh'ma"), so does the fourth lesson: "Sh'ma Yisra'el…"

The fifth (and final) lesson in this series is also relatively easy to identify. Recall that the first lesson, beginning in D'varim 4:1, was introduced with the phrase "V'Atah Yisra'el Sh'ma…" – "And now, Yisra'el, pay heed…". The introductory phrase, "V'atah Yisra'el", is only found in two places in the Torah – at the beginning of Chapter 4 in D'varim and at D'varim 10:12. Although the word "Sh'ma" is missing (an omission which will be explained anon), this phrase which is otherwise a hapax legomenon [unmatched phrase in the T'nakh] seems to be a clear indicator of a new lesson being introduced.

IV. LESSONS FOUR AND FIVE

Before demonstrating the rest of the "structure", a word about these two lessons. It isn't merely the introductory phrases which indicate the beginning of a new lesson and, therefore, a separate component in the Parashah. The content and context of each section is independent in such a way as to be a clearly marked-off unit. Let's examine them together:

The unit beginning with 9:1 is a rather long speech (40 verses, several of which are extraordinary long) which is Mosheh's retelling of the sin of the Golden Calf and its aftermath. Although it includes two tangential verses (10:8-9) about the separation and sanctification of the Levi'im (marked off by the introductory "Ba'eit Hahee", compare 10:8 with 10:1), this is a part and parcel of the Golden Calf episode as it is the loyalty of the Levi'im which earned them their holy status (see Sh'mot 32:26).

Why is this unit here; i.e. what is Mosheh's purpose in relating this heinous crime within the context of this "shiur"?

In last week's shiur, I suggested that the entire purpose of Mosheh's shiur was to act as "shadchan" (matchmaker) between the B'nei Yisra'el and HaKadosh Barukh Hu. This is, quintessentially, the job of a Rebbi – to bring his students closer to God. As such, Mosheh began with a lesson about the nature of the Divine, using the Sinai experience to point out what their parents saw and what they did not see (physical images etc.). The second lesson justified Mosheh's role as lawgiver. The third lesson describes the ideal relationship between the people and God (loving God etc.). Consider what's "missing" from the formula: If I am interested in entering into a relationship with someone, be it a business partnership, an educational endeavor or what have you, I need to know several things. I must know as much as possible about the potential partner (lesson #1); I'll need to know the medium of the relationship (lesson #2 – Torah [given via Mosheh] is the medium of our relationship with God) and the ideal of that relationship (lesson #3). There is, of course, one more piece to the puzzle: Who am I? For me to successfully relate to another, I need to know something about my own nature, tendencies, strengths and weaknesses etc.; this knowledge is as critical (if not more so) than my knowledge about the potential partner. Similarly, the people had been informed about God – but needed to be reminded about how they had previously behaved in their relationship with God. Therefore, Mosheh must incorporate the story of the Golden Calf into his "shiur" which is aimed at bringing the B'nei Yisra'el into a full and complete relationship with God.

The final lesson is also a clear and independent unit. Although the opening formula lacks the familiar keyword "Sh'ma", there is good reason for that omission. Unlike the first four lessons, in which Mosheh is instructing them with information which is indispensable for the success of their national mission, the final lesson turns that instruction on its head and puts the B'nei Yisra'el in the "driver's seat". Now, instead of Mosheh telling them what they must do, he is inviting them to move beyond that which is demanded and commanded: "And now, Yisra'el, what does Hashem your God ask of you, but to fear Hashem your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve Hashem your God with all your heart and with all your soul, To keep the commandments of Hashem, and His statutes, which I command you this day for your good?… Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked…You shall fear Hashem your God; Him shall you serve, and to Him shall you hold fast, and swear by His Name." (D'varim 10:12-20)

Until now, the B'nei Yisra'el were given prescriptions and proscriptions – commands and limitations. Although there had been allusions to a greater picture, that had never been laid out in such idealistic detail, nor presented as a challenge in place of a command. This fifth lesson is, indeed, a culmination of the "shiur", as it goes beyond the ideal relationship outlined in the third lesson ("Sh'ma…v'Ahavta…"). More than the command to internalize our love for God completely ("…with all of your heart…"), this final lesson invites us to rise above our base natures ("…circumcise the foreskin of your heart…") in terminology that is otherwise reserved for eschatological visions (e.g. D'varim 30:6, Yehezqe'el 36:26).

Although this final lesson includes the three verses about the Land (11:10-12), we will examine these from another perspective at the end of this presentation.

V. THE "EKEV" INTERRUPTION

As noted above, the first part of our Parashah (7:12-8:20) is something of an interruption – and it's identity as an independent and complete section is quite easy to see.

As we have discussed in earlier shiurim, the Torah utilizes all sorts of allusions, complicated structures and literary techniques to impart its messages. It is fundamental to the methodology of our classical interpretive tradition that uncommon words, especially when appearing in significant locations within a given text, have been deliberately placed there by the Author in order to catch our attention. This methodology is particularly helpful when that uncommon word shows up in a seemingly unrelated context – it is often the case that

the Torah is creating an association between the two cases in order to create an "information interface" between the two. In Halakhic exegesis, this methodology is known as "Gezerah Shavah"; however, our Rabbis did not limit its use to that discipline (see e.g. Beresheet Rabbah 44:14, Sh'mot Rabbah 9:7).

The second word (and key word) of our Parashah is an extremely rare one in the Torah. The word Ekev, commonly translated as "on account of" or "since", appears in only five locations in the Humash. Not only does our Parashah begin with an uncommon word – but one of the other four occurences of that word comes at 8:20 – "…Ekev lo Tish'm'un…" Taking into account the common style of "bookending" which the Torah employs (see our discussion on Parashiot Matot-Mas'ei) and the use of this all-too-rare word at both bookends, it is fairly clear that 7:12-8:20 have the potential of being an independent and self-contained unit.

As mentioned, this "structural analysis" only leaves us with a potentially unified section; we have yet to prove that the content and theme fit that bill.

VI. ANALYZING THE "EKEV" SECTION

Note that the Ekev section is broken up into three "open" paragraphs ("parashiot p'tuhot" – you can see this if you follow with a Tanakh, such as Koren, which breaks up paragraphs where there are "parashah" breaks):

7:12-26 – "v'Haya Ekev Tish'm'un…"

8:1-18 – "Kol haMitzvah…"

8:19-20 – "v'Haya Im Shakhoah Tishkah…"

The final mini-paragraph serves an obvious purpose. All of the blessings which are promised in the first 33 verses of this section will be reversed if the people do the opposite of the stated condition: "v'Haya Ekev Tish'm'un…". If you obey the Mitzvot, God will grant you security in the Land, success in conquest etc. The final two verses leave us without a "pareve" middle ground – if we forget God and do not listen ("…Ekev LO Tish'm'un…") then we will be destroyed.

What are we to make of the first two paragraphs, these 33 verses of condition and blessing?

In order to understand the impact of the "Ekev message" – and the reason it is divided into two separate parashiot – let's take a careful look at the two sections.
Although both 7:12-26 and 8:1-18 promise us a successful entry into the Land and no lack of material bounty if we obey God and remember His kindnesses, the focus is slightly different in each section.

The first section begins with "v'Hayah Ekev Tish'm'un eit haMishpatim ha'Eleh…" – "If you heed these Mishpatim…". However one chooses to translate the various words for Law – "Eduyot", "Hukkim" etc., "Mishpatim" almost certainly belong to the realm of civil law and social interaction (e.g. Sh'mot 21:1).

Conversely, the second section declares its emphasis right away: "Kol haMitzvah…" Although the word "Mitzvah" is usually considered a generic term for all commandments, in the context of the first third of D'varim it seems to take on a unique meaning: Those actions which reflect and enhance our close relationship with God. (See, e.g. D'varim 6:1, 11:22 – see also 30:11)

In the first section, we are told to remember the Exodus – that is, the very fact of our miraculous exit from Egypt.

In the second section, we are also told to remember the Exodus – but here, again, the emphasis shifts. We are told to remember: "Remember the long way that Hashem your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his Mitzvot. He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of Hashem. The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years…then do not exalt yourself, forgetting Hashem your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good." (8:2-16)

As opposed to the actual liberation that we are told to recall in the first section, it is the fact of God sustaining us throughout the desert for forty years which is the topic of remembrance in the second section.

Finally, note how the Land is described in each paragraph.

In the first section, the emphasis is on the conquerability of the Land:

“Moreover, Hashem your God will send the pestilence against them, until even the survivors and the fugitives are destroyed. Have no dread of them, for Hashem your God, who is present with you, is a great and awesome God. Hashem your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to make a quick end of them, otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for you. But Hashem your God will give them over to you, and throw them into great panic, until they are destroyed. He will hand their kings over to you and you shall blot out their name from under heaven; no one will be able to stand against you, until you have destroyed them.” (7:20-24)

Contradistinctively, the second paragraph ignores the military concerns regarding the Land and instead describes its beauty and bounty: “For Hashem your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless Hashem your God for the good land that he has given you.” (8:7-10)

The three salient differences between these sections can be summed up in this chart:

Section – Laws – The Land – Remembrance

7:12-26 – Mishpatim – Conquerable – Exodus

8:1-18 – Mitzvot – Beautiful, Sustaining – 40 years in the desert

VII. THE AVRAHAM CONNECTION

As mentioned above, the keyword “Ekev” is extremely rare in the Torah. Understanding the implications of its use here will help us make sense of the entire Ekev section.

Besides the two occurences here and one (which will be discussed below) in Bamidbar, the only two instances of “Ekev” in the Torah are found within the Avraham narratives.

When Avraham demonstrates his complete devotion to God on Mount Moriah, he was given the most complete blessing of his life:
The angel of Hashem called to Avraham a second time from heaven, and said, “By Myself I have sworn, says Hashem: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because (“Ekev”) you have obeyed My voice.” (B’resheet 22:15-18)

Later on, when Yitzhak considers following in his father’s footsteps and descending to Egypt to escape the famine plaguing K’na’an, we are told:

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that had occurred in the days of Avraham. And Yitzhak went to Gerar, to King Abimelech of the Philistines. Hashem appeared to Yitzhak and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; settle in the land that I shall show you. Reside in this land as an alien, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath that I swore to your father Avraham. I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and will give to your offspring all these lands; and all the nations of the earth shall gain blessing for themselves through your offspring, because (“Ekev”) Avraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.” (B’resheet 26:1-5).
It must certainly be clear to all members of Mosheh Rabbenu’s audience that this rare word, opening and closing this section of his “shiur”, is intended to create an Avraham-assocation for us. But what is that association?
Given these two selections, we would assume that Avraham’s greatness lay chiefly in his total obedience to God and the spiritual heights he achieved. The scene at the Akeda is nothing if not the quintessence of devotional worship.

We are, however, provided another perspective of Avraham’s stature which gives us a broader view of his greatness:

Hashem said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of Hashem by doing righteousness and justice; so that Hashem may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (B’resheet 18:17-19)

As much as Avraham is a devotional worshipper, he is (perhaps even more) a man whose very soul speaks of righteousness, whose being is bound up with the pursuit of justice. Witness his negotiations with God regarding the fate of the evil cities of S’dom (ibid. 18:23-32).

The “Ekev” section in our Parashah is placed here to remind us of the dual nature of Avraham’s distinction: Lonely Man of Faith and Civic Man of Justice. (Avraham’s reputation is not only based on his success in both of these areas of moral growth – but also his ability

to synthesize them into one persona.)

Subsequent to teaching us about our ideal relationship with God (at the end of Parashat Va'et'hanan) and prior to reminding us of our potential for infidelity (9:1-10:11), Mosheh Rabbenu interjects a lesson which is grounded in our awareness of our earliest roots and the spiritual and ethical heights which our first Patriarch scaled.

Before addressing the dual messages of the "Ekev" section, we should briefly examine the one remaining occurrence of "Ekev" in the Torah:

"…nevertheless, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Hashem, none of the people who have seen My glory and the signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested Me these ten times and have not obeyed My voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their ancestors; none of those who despised Me shall see it. But My servant Kalev, because ("Ekev") he has a different spirit and has followed Me wholeheartedly, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it." (Bamidbar 14:21-24)

As we see throughout the story of the scouts, Kalev was willing to stand up to their derogation of the Land and publicly face his ten blasphemous colleagues. This is very much in the spirit of Avraham, who is called *Avram ha'Ivri* (B'resheet 14:13). He is given that name specifically within the context of his war against the four kings and our Rabbis explain the meaning as follows: The entire world was one one side (*Ever*) of the river and he was on the other side. (B'resheet Rabbah 42:8 – see also Yehoshua 24:2). In other words, it was Avraham's willingness to stand up against anyone and everyone to defend and promote monotheism and its attendant value system which earned him the title *Ivri*.

This is exactly the spirit which moved Kalev to stand up to the ten detractors of Eretz Yisra'e. The Torah uses the key word "Ekev" in his praise to link him to the valor of Avraham. [Might there be a connection here with Kalev's visit to Hevron and the Rabbinic tradition that he went to pray at Avraham's tomb?]

VIII. MISHPATIM AND MITZVOT

We can now revisit our "Ekev" section and explain the two separate paragraphs and their significant differences.

Perhaps the most telling distinction between "Mishpatim" and "Mitzvot" lies in their very nature. Whereas a Mitzvah (in the context of this part of Sefer D'varim) is an act which is part of a life-long process of spiritual development and sensitivity, a Mishpat is purely utilitarian and designed to promote the common weal.

It is abundantly clear why we must not steal, kill etc. and why we must pay workers on time, return lost items and so on. The extent to which a society is governed by these norms correlates closely to its material, social and spiritual well-being.

On the other hand, a person who engages in diligent Torah study, prays with great focus and generally observes those Mitzvot which fall under the rubric of "Ahavat Hashem" (Love of God), finds that the development of that relationship is a slow, arduous process. Each act of devotion is not an end in and of itself; it is rather a building block towards a closer relationship with haKadosh Barukh Hu.
In much the same spirit, we can distinguish between the two "remembrances" in this section. The matter of the Exodus itself, although performed with great wonders and portents, was essentially a utilitarian act. God desired to bring the people out of slavery and into their own Land – and that is exactly what He did.

Conversely, the Mahn (which is the object of remembrance in the second paragraph) was not a purely pragmatic "gift". The manner in which the B'nei Yisra'el were sustained throughout their desert sojourn was designed to enhance their awareness of the Ribbono Shel Olam on an ongoing basis: "In order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but that man may live on anything that Hashem decrees." (D'varim 8:3)

Note that the first paragraph promises us that if we (1) Remember the Exodus and (2) observe the Mishpatim, we will be successful in (3) Conquering the Land. The focus here is purely pragrmatic, following the lead of Avraham's "social-justice" agenda. (Keep in mind that it is within the context of war that Avraham earns his title of *Ivri*).

In the second paragraph, we are told that if we (1a) Remember the Mahn and (2a) observe the Mitzvot, we will (3) enjoy a beautiful and sustaining Land. Here, the focus is on the personal development of a relationship, the ongoing process of becoming more aware of God's role in our lives and the beauty and bounty of His Land.

IX. POSTSCRIPT

After completing his shiur, Mosheh adds three verses which describe the Land in even more glowing terms than those found in the "Ekev" section:
"For the land, which you enter to possess, is not as the land of Egypt, from where you came out, where you sowed your seed, and watered it with your foot, as a garden of vegetables; But the land, which you are going over to possess, is a land of hills and valleys, and

drinks water from the rain of the skies; A land which Hashem your God cares for; the eyes of Hashem your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." (11:10-12)

Beyond the pragmatic promise of conquest, beyond even the aesthetic beauty and bounty of the Land, we are given an even more powerful insight into the special place which God has reserved for His people. All of these blessings, including the development of an ideal relationship with God as outlined in Mosheh Rabbenu's "shiur", are only possible in that Land which God always watches, "from the beginning of the year to the end of the year."

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PARSHAT EKEV

Who 'stops' the rain?

According to Parshat Ekev (and what we recite every day in the second 'parshia' of 'kriyat shema'), the answer is God Himself. To better appreciate the Biblical significance of rain ['matar'], this week's shiur discusses the correlation between Divine Providence and the climate of the Land of Israel.

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of Parshat Ekev, the land of Israel receives what appears to be a very positive assessment:

> "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a **good** land... a land of wheat and barley (...the 7 species) ...a land which lacks nothing..." (8:7-9).

Yet, later in the Parsha, the Torah describes the land of Egypt as much better:

> "For the land which you are about to conquer is **not like the land of Egypt**, from which you have come, where when you planted your field you watered it with your foot... The Land which you are about to conquer, a land of hills and valleys, receives its water from the rains (**matar**) of the heavens" (11:10-11).

So which land is better, and on what do we base this comparison? To answer this question, we take a closer look at various other instances where the Torah compares the Lands of Israel to the Land of Egypt.

THE FIRST 'FAUCET'

We begin our study with the Torah's 'strange' description of how one would water his field in the land of Egypt:

> "For [your] land is **not** like the land of Egypt... where you planted your field and **watered it with your foot**" (see 11:10).

For some reason, Egypt is described as a land that 'you water with your feet'? To appreciate this rather strange depiction, and how it forms the basis of Egypt's comparison to the land of Israel, we must review a few basic facts of world history.

In ancient times, civilizations developed along major rivers, as they provided not only a means of transportation, but also the necessary water for agriculture and consumption.

If was for this reason that Egypt (developing along the Nile) and Mesopotamia (developing along the Tigris and Euphrates) became two of the greatest centers of ancient civilization.

To enhance their agriculture, the Egyptians developed a sophisticated irrigation system by digging ditches from the Nile to their fields. Using this system to water his field, an Egyptian would open his local irrigation ditch by simply kicking away the dirt '**with his foot**'. To 'turn off' the water supply, he would use his foot once again to move the dirt to close the ditch. [Consider this the first 'faucet' system.]

This background explains why the Torah describes Egypt as a land 'watered by your feet' (see 11:10). In contrast, the Torah describes the land of Israel as:

> "The land that you are going now to inherit is a land of **hills & valleys**, which drinks from the **rains of Heaven**" (11:11).

In contrast to Egypt, Israel lacks a mighty river such as the Nile to provide it with a consistent supply of water. Instead, the agriculture in the Land of Israel is totally dependent on **rainfall**. Therefore, when it **does** rain, the fields are watered 'automatically'; however, when it does **not** rain, nothing will grow for the crops will dry out.

> [It should be noted that even though Israel does have a river, the Jordan - but it is located some 300 meters **below** sea level (in the Jordan Valley), and thus not very helpful to waterthe fields. In modern times, Israel has basically 'solved' this problem by pumping up the water from the Kinneret into a national water carrier.]

Hence, even though the land of Israel may have a slight advantage over Egypt when it does rain [see Rashi 11:10], from an agricultural perspective the land of Egypt has a clear advantage [see Ramban 11:10]. Furthermore, any responsible family provider would obviously prefer the 'secure' option - to establish his home in Egypt, instead of opting for the 'risky' Israeli alternative.

So why is the Torah going out of its way to tell us that Egypt is better than Israel, especially in the same Parsha where the Torah first tells us how Israel is a 'great' land, missing nothing! (See 8:9!) Furthermore, why would Moshe Rabbeinu mention this point to Bnei Yisrael specifically at this time, as they prepare to enter their land.

To answer these questions, we must re-examine these psukim in their wider context.

THREE PARSHIOT RELATING TO THE FEAR OF GOD

Using a Tanach Koren (or similar Chumash), take a look at the psukim that we have just quoted (i.e. 11:10-12), noting how these three psukim form their own 'parshia'. Note however how this short 'parshia' begins with the word 'ki' - 'for' or 'because' - which obviously connects it thematically to the previous parshia:10:12-11:9. Therefore, we must first consider the theme of this preceding 'parshia' and then see how it relates to our topic.

Let's begin by taking a quick look at the opening psukim of that 'parshia', noting how it introduces its theme very explicitly:

> "And now, O Israel, what is it that God demands of you? It is to **fear** ('yir'a') the Lord your God, to walk in his ways and to love Him... Keep, therefore, this entire 'mitzva'... that you should conquer the Land..." (see 10:12-14).

As you continue to read this parshia (thru 11:9), you'll also notice how this topic or the 'fear of God' continues, as it is emphasized over and over again.

Hence, the theme of our short 'parshia' (11:10-12), where the Torah compares the land of Israel to Egypt, must somehow be related to the theme of **Yir'at Hashem** (fearing God). But what does the water source of a country have to do with the fear of God?

To answer this question, we must read the Torah's conclusion of this comparison (in the final pasuk of our 'parshia'):

> "It is a land which the Lord your God **looks after** ('doresh otah'), on which Hashem always keeps His eye, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (11:12).

This pasuk informs us that God Himself takes direct control over the rain that falls in the Land of Israel! In contrast to Egypt where the water supply from the Nile is basically **constant**, the water supply in Israel is **sporadic,** and hence more clearly a vehicle of God's will. Considering that one's survival in the Land of Israel is dependent on rain, and the rain itself is dependent on God's will, then to survive in the land of Israel,one must depend on God - a dependence which should have a direct affect on one's level of **Yir't Hashem**!

WHO STOPPED THE RAIN?

In this manner, the Land of Israel is not better than Egypt, rather it is **different** - for its agriculture is more clearly dependent on the abundance of rain. A good rainy season will bring plenty, while a lack of rain will yield drought and famine. Hence, living in a land with this type of 'touchy' rainy season, dependent on God's will, should reinforce one's fear of God.

The next 'parshia' [i.e. ve-haya im shamo'a...' (11:13-21), the second parshia of daily 'kriyat shema'] not only supports this theme, it forms its logical conclusion:

> "If you obey the commandments... I will grant the rain (matar) for your land in season... then you shall eat and be satisfied...
> Be careful, lest you be lured after other gods... for Hashem

will be angry ... and He will shut up the skies and there will be no rain (matar)..." (see 11:13-16).

Thus, according to Sefer Devarim, the matar that falls in the land of Israel acts not only as a 'barometer' of Am Yisrael's faithfulness to God, but also serves as a vehicle of divine retribution. God will use this matar to 'communicate' with His nation. Rainfall, at the proper time, becomes a sign that is pleased with our 'national behavior', while drought (i.e. holding back the matar) becomes a sign of divine anger.

So which land **is** better? The answer simply depends on what one is looking for in life. An individual striving for a closer relationship with God would obviously prefer the Land of Israel, while an individual wary of such direct dependence on God would obviously opt for the more secure life in Egypt ['chutz la-aretz'].

To support this interpretation, we will now show how the connection between matar and Divine Providence had already emerged as a Biblical theme back in Sefer Breishit.

BACK TO AVRAHAM AVINU

At the onset of our national history, we find a very similar comparison between the lands of Egypt and Israel.

Recall, that when God first chose Avraham Avinu, commanding him to uproot his family from Mesopotamia and travel to the land of Canaan (see 12:1-3), his nephew Lot was consistently mentioned as Avraham's 'travel partner' (see 12:4-6 & 13:1-2). As Avraham was childless and Lot had lost his father, it would only be logical for Avraham to assume that Lot would become his successor. Nevertheless, after their return from a trip to Egypt, a quarrel broke out between them, which ultimately led to Lot's 'rejection' from Avraham's 'chosen family'.

One could suggest that the Torah's description of these events relates directly to this Biblical theme of matar. To show how, let's begin with the Torah's description of that quarrel:

> "And Avraham said to Lot, let there not be a quarrel between us... if you go to the **right** [=south], I'll go to the left [=north] (& vice versa)..." (see Breishit 13:8-9).
>
> [Note that Avraham suggested that Lot choose either North or South (13:8-9), not East or West as is often assumed! See Targum Unkelos which translate right & left as 'south' or 'north' (see also Seforno). Throughout Chumash 'yemin' always refers to the south, kedem - east, etc.]

In other words, Avraham Avinu, standing in Bet El (see 13:3), is offering Lot a choice between the mountain ranges of 'Yehuda' (to the south) or the hills of the 'Shomron' (to the north). To our surprise, Lot chooses neither option! Instead, Lot prefers to divorce himself from Avraham Avinu altogether, choosing the Jordan Valley instead. Note, however, the connection between Lot's decision to 'go east' and his most recent experience in Egypt:

> "Then Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the whole plain of Jordan, for it was all well watered (by the Jordan **River**)... just like the Garden of the Lord, **like the land of Egypt**..." (13:10-12).

After his brief visit to Egypt (as described at the end of chapter 12), it seems as though Lot could no longer endure the hard life in the 'hills and valleys' of the Land of Israel. Instead, Lot opts for a more secure lifestyle along the banks of the Jordan River, similar to the secure lifestyle in Egypt by the banks of the Nile River.

> [Note especially how the Torah (in the above pasuk) connects between this river valley and the 'Garden of the Lord', i.e. Gan Eden (for it was set along four rivers, see Breishit 2:9-14).]

Lot departs towards Sdom for the 'good life', while Avraham Avinu remains in Bet El, at the heart of the Land of Israel (see 13:14-16, see also previous TSC shiur on Matot / Mas'ei).

Rashi, commenting on Breishit 13:11, quotes a Midrash which arrives at a very similar thematic conclusion:

> "Va-yisa Lot mi-kedem... [Lot traveled from kedem] - He traveled **away** from He who began the Creation ('kadmono shel olam'), saying, I can no longer endure being with Avraham nor with his God" ("iy efshi, lo be-Avraham, ve-lo be-Elokav").

As Rashi alludes to, this quarrel between Avraham and Lot stemmed from a conflict between two opposite lifestyles:

* A life striving for a dependence (and hence a relationship) with God (=Avraham Avinu);
* A life where man prefers to be independent of God (=Lot).

The path chosen by Avraham Avinu leads to 'Bet El' - the house of God, while the path chosen by Lot leads to 'Sdom'- the city of corruption (see 13:12-13).

BACK TO THE CREATION

This Biblical theme of matar is so fundamental, that it actually begins at the time of Creation! Recall how the Gan Eden narrative (i.e. Breishit 2:4-3:24) opens with a very peculiar statement in regard to matar:

> "These are the generations of Heavens and Earth from their Creation... And no shrub of the field had yet grown in the land and no grains had yet sprouted, because Hashem had not yet sent rain (matar) on the land, nor was there **man** to work the field..." (Breishit 2:4-5).

It is rather amazing how this entire account of Creation begins with a statement that nothing could grow without matar or man!

Furthermore, this very statement is rather odd, for it appears to contradict what was stated earlier (in the first account of Creation [= 'perek aleph'] which implies that water was just about everywhere (see1:2,6,9 etc.).

Finally, this very statement that man is needed for vegetation to grow seems to contradict what we see in nature. As we all know shrubs and trees (and especially weeds) seem to grow very nicely even without man's help. Yet, according to this opening pasuk of the second account of Creation - nothing could grow without this combination of matar and **man**.

Nonetheless, Chumash emphasizes in this opening statement that both man and matar are key factors in the forthcoming story of creation. To appreciate why, we must first very briefly review our conclusions in regard to the comparison between the two accounts in Sefer Breishit.

The first account [perek aleph] focused on God's creation of all 'nature' in seven days. God's Name - 'Elokim' - reflected its key point that all **powers** of nature - that appear to stem from the powers of various gods - are truly the Creation of One God. To remind ourselves of this key point, we are commanded to refrain from all creativity once every seven days. ['olam ha-teva']

In contrast, the second account ['perek bet'] - focused on the special relationship between man and his Creator, as reflected in its special environment - Gan Eden - created by God for man to work and keep. In that environment, man is responsible to follow God's laws, and His Name ['shem Havaya'] reflects His presence and involvement ['olam ha-hitgalut'].

[See TSC shiur on Parshat Breishit.]

Therefore, this opening pasuk - emphasizing the relationship between matar and man - must relate in some manner to the special relationship between man and God.

The Midrash (quoted by Rashi), bothered by this peculiarity, offers a very profound interpretation, explaining this connection:

> "Ki lo himtir...' And why had it not yet rained? ... because "adam ayin a'avod et ha-adama", for man had not yet been created to work the field, and thus no one had yet recognized the significance of rain. And when man was created and recognized their importance, **he prayed for rain**. Then the rain fell and the trees and the grass grew..." (see Rashi 2:5).

This interpretation reflects the very same theme that emerged in our discussion of matar in Parshat Ekev. According to this Rashi,

God created man towards the purpose that he recognize God and His Creations. From this perspective, matar emerges as a vehicle to facilitate that recognition.

The reason for this may stem from the very meaning of the word matar. Note that matar does not mean only 'rain'. Rather, the 'shoresh' - 'lehamtir' - relates to anything that falls from heaven to earth. Rain is the classic example; but even 'bread' or 'fire', when they fall from heaven, are described by the Bible as matar.

[In regard to bread, see Breishit 19:24 re: the story of Sedom, "Ve-Hashem **himtir** al Sedom gofrit va-eish min ha-shamayim". In relation to fire coming from heaven, see Shmot 16:4 re: the manna: "hineni **mamtir** lachem lechem min ha-shamayim").]

When man contemplates Creation, there may appear to be an unbridgeable gap between 'heaven' and 'earth'. Man must overcome that gap, raising his goals from the 'earthly' to the 'heavenly'. In this context, matar - a physical proof that something in heaven can come down to earth - may symbolize man's potential (and purpose) to bridge that gap in the opposite direction, i.e. from 'earthly' to 'heavenly'.

Hence, Biblical matar emerges as more than just a type of water, but more so as a symbol of a potential connection between the heavens and earth, and hence between God and man.

In the special spiritual environment created by the climate of the Land of Israel, as described in Parshat Ekev, matar serves as a vehicle by which Am Yisrael can perfect their relationship with God. Even though others lands may carry a better potential for prosperity, the Land of Israel becomes an 'ideal' environment for the growth of this spiritual environment,

shabbat shalom,
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN:

A. Relate the famous Midrash Chazal of 'ein mayim ela Torah' [- the true water is really the Torah] to the above shiur.

B. Note how the word matar appears in relation to the Flood in Breishit 7:4-5. Based on the above shiur and our shiur on 'perek aleph & bet' (on Parshat Breishit), attempt to explain why.

C. In the psukim by Lot, the Nile and Jordan rivers are compared to the rivers of Gan Eden.
1. Does this indicate that there may be a positive aspect to the supply of water by a River?
2. Why should a river be appropriate for Gan Eden, while rain is more appropriate for Eretz Yisrael?
3. Relate this to Zecharaya 14:7-9 & Yechezkel 47:1-12!

D. Throughout the time period of the Shoftim, and even during the time period of the First Monarchy, many Israelites worshipped the 'Ba'al' - the Canaanite rain god.
1. Relate the nature of this transgression to the above shiur.
2. Relate this to the mishnayot of Masechet Ta'anit, which requires national fast days should rain not fall in sufficient quantities early in the rainy season.
3. Relate to Kings I 17:1 & 18:21 and context of perek 18!

E. In last week's shiur we noted that the 'mitzva' section of the main speech includes 'mitzvot' given originally during Ma'amad Har Sinai, as well as 'tochachot' added in the 40th year by Moshe Rabbeinu.
1. Show textually why from 8:1 till 10:11 must be an 'addition' of the 40th year, while 6:4-7:26 is most likely 'original'! Prove your answer. Use Shmot 23:20-33 in your proof!
2. 10:12-11:21. Would you say that these parshiot are also 'additions' or originals, or possibly a combination. Support your answer, and relate it to the above shiur!

F. The story of chet ha-egel is repeated in chap 9.
1. In what context is this story now being brought down.
Relate to 9:4-6, and especially to 'ki am ksheh oref ata' (9:6).
Relate also to 9:7
2. What other examples of this behavior are cited in this perek?
3. Based on this observation, explain why the story about chet ha-egel is broken up in the middle by psukim 9:22-23, and later by 10:6-9.
4. What is the primary theme of this short 'tochacha'?

G. Read 9:25-29 carefully. Is this simply a review of Moshe's request that God invoke His 'midot ha-rachamim" after the incident of chet ha-egel, or do you find a theme from 'chet ha-meraglim' as well? Support your answer by comparing Shmot chapter 34:1-9 and Bamidbar 14:11-25.

Based on the context of chapter 9, can you explain why?